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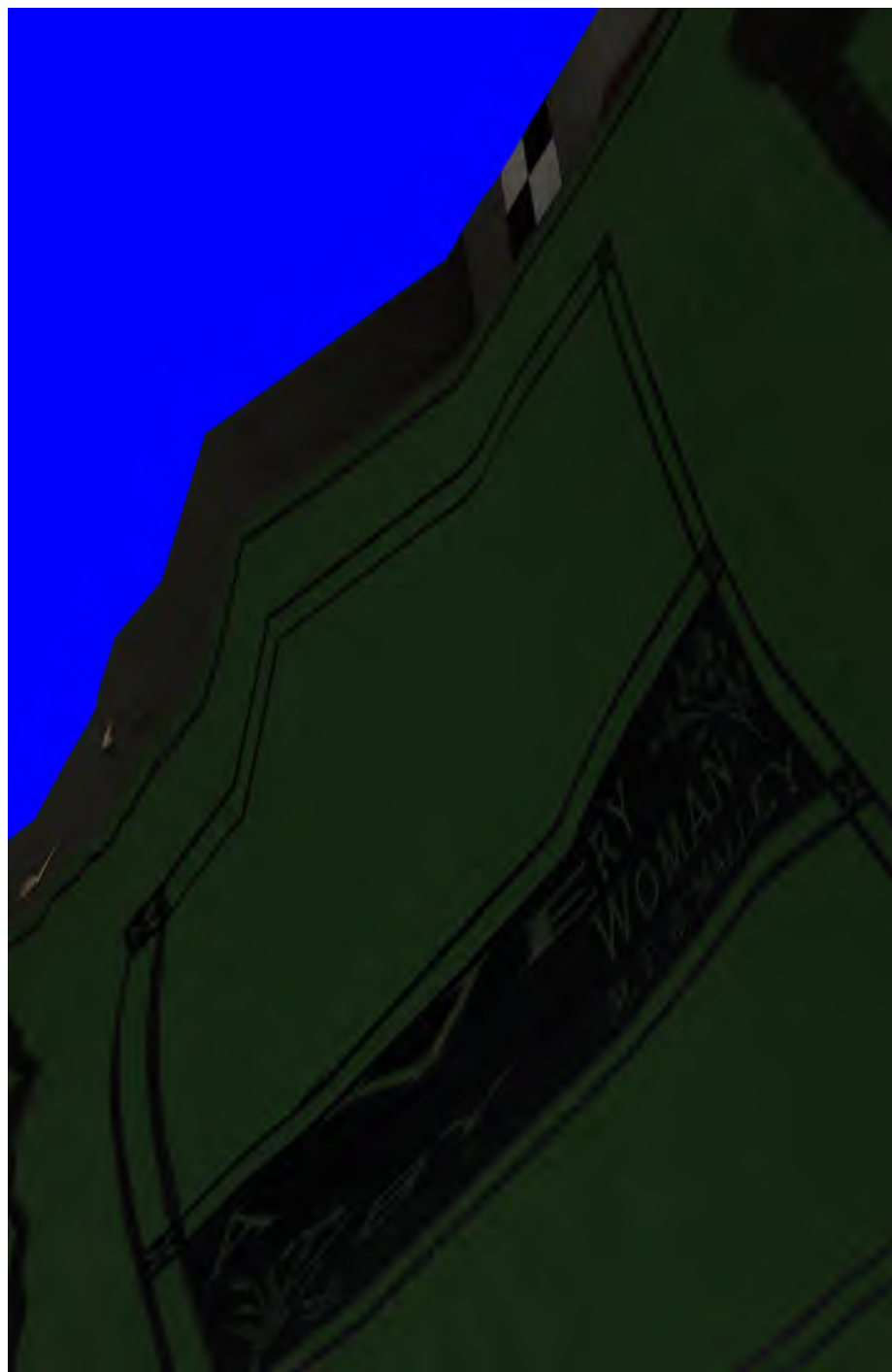
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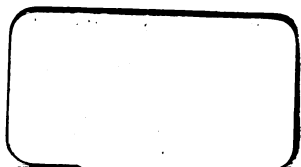
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A VERY WOMAN.

VOL. II.

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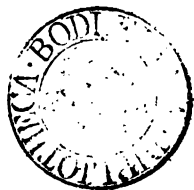
A VERY WOMAN.

BY

M. F. O'MALLEY.

" Like to the clear, sweet spring of dawning day,
Like to the fresh'ning breath of opening May,
Like the glad lark sprung from the glittering dew,
An Angel! yet a very woman too!"

VOL. II.



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A VERY WOMAN.

CHAPTER I.

"What if we still ride on, we two,
With life for ever old yet new,
Changed not in kind but in degree,
The instant made Eternity,—
And Heaven just prove that I and she,
Ride, ride together, for ever ride?"

R. BROWNING.

ONE day that Frank and Mr Willoughby were out hunting, Vivian said to Angela at luncheon-time, "What do you say to a ride this afternoon, Angel? I have got cobwebs in my brain with writing."

"I should like it of all things," she

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replied. "I will go and put on my habit at once."

He looked at her with an admiration that was rather sad, as he swung her lightly into her saddle ; the dark, close-fitting habit, and severe outlines of the high hat, showed off to much advantage the regular features, dazzling complexion, and perfect figure. Vivian had seen many beautiful women in his life, but this one had so much soul in her dark eyes, there was such an expression of divine purity on that child-like mouth, and yet those exquisite red lips seemed made for kisses.

It was a dangerous thought. A sudden magnetic thrill seemed to go through him, a mad impulse came over him to clasp her in his arms, to tell her that he loved her, to make her come with him, — away, — somewhere,

—anywhere, to the other end of the world. But in an instant Reason had recovered her sway. Weak fool that he was,—this was his brother's betrothed, who could never feel for him more than the cold light of friendly affection. She loved Harry probably, possibly,—Vivian, like all men, scarcely realised with vividness the fact that a woman could love any particular man that was not himself,—at any rate there was a deep gulf between him and her. He sprang on his horse and they rode away.

“Come across the park,” he said, in a constrained, unmodulated voice, “I want a canter.”

Once on the soft turf the horses became excited, and the canter soon turned into a wild gallop. Angela was a tiny bit nervous ; she was not by any means sure that her

horse would stop if she tried to pull him up. However, she had no wish to do so, for, mingled with the slight fear, was a wild delight in the rapid motion. On the soft grass with the easy action of her well-trained horse, the gallop seemed like a bird's flying through the air. To the free, fast movement was added some other excitement that beat in her veins and pulses. Time, reality seemed annihilated; for those brief seconds life was a dream of physical delight and all-sufficing companionship. If only it could last! But, here was the lodge gate, and Vivian was pulling up his horse; soon she was riding quietly by his side again.

"You are a true Magyar," he said, looking at the bright colour on her cheek; "you take to riding by nature."

"Yes," said Angela, "a Hungarian ought always to be at home in the saddle; and I love riding, but I don't ride as well as Frank, though."

"Frank has been on the back of a horse ever since she was a baby. I hope though that she and Harry will not persuade you to hunt."

"Why?"

"It is too rough and dangerous an amusement for a woman; will you promise me never to attempt it?"

"Yes," said Angela; she was on the point of adding, "I will promise anything you ask me," but just stopped the words on her lips. Perhaps he felt them, for he had curious intuitions of the thoughts that were in her mind; he looked at her, and it was with difficulty that he restrained himself from a

passionate expression of love. Tennyson's description of Guinevere came into his mind :—

“ She looked so lovely as she swayed
The rein with dainty finger tips,
A man had given all other bliss,
And all his worldly worth for this,
To waste his whole heart in one kiss
Upon her perfect lips.”

Again that thought! Madman that he was! Why had he lingered near here when he began to discover the true nature of his feelings for her? Pshaw! he was not a child, unable to retain his self-control! and she, the innocent darling, guessed nothing of what he felt. She was engaged to a man she loved, whom she had chosen; in a short time she would be a happy wife,

and he would be far away, living without her as best he might. In the meantime the passing hour was sweet; each minute with her would be well paid for by years of misery; he could not, he would not, leave her.

Still he was determined that by no word or look would he betray his brother's trust; she should never dream of the pain he was suffering. Just as if by the sudden softness of his eyes when he looked at her, the quick tenderness of his voice when he spoke to her, he did not confess his secret a dozen times a day! Angela, however, had never asked herself the meaning of these looks and tones, though several times they had made her wild Hungarian heart leap up with a sudden, quick throb of joy; but she was very young, very innocent, very ignorant

of her own nature. Vivian was Harry's brother, she had a right to love him; he was so noble and wise, he had opened to her such vistas of thought where before there had been blank walls, and she did not realise to what an extent the master himself pervaded all the subjects he taught her.

"What were you doing this time last year?" she asked as they rode along.

"Let me see,—I was with a shooting party in a great, deserted palace in Bombay."

"Tell me what it was like."

"Well—imagine a great square of white marble palaces; endless arcades of marble pillars; great tanks of clear water, with flights of marble steps leading down to them; it seemed as if one could wander

on for ever through the vistas of columns; and all this in the possession of a handful of Mohammedan monks. I used to spend half the night wandering about alone in the moonlight through the courts and arcades, and never hear a sound but the laughing of the jackals in the distance, and the Moslem cry to prayer, 'Allah Il Allah,' like a Gregorian chant. I would imitate it for you, only I am afraid I should be taken for an escaped lunatic."

"I can picture it exactly," said Angela. As he spoke she seemed to see the scene—the brilliant moonlight and gleaming white pillars, the black shadows and clear water. "But," she continued, "I didn't know Mohammedans had religious orders."

"Oh, yes," said Vivian, "they are institu-

tions by no means monopolised by Christianity. I spent two months once in a Buddhist monastery in Thibet, a place perched up on the side of a rock, and I can assure you the monks have tonsured heads, and rosaries, and relics, and fast, and go to prayers at the sound of a little bell, and wear long robes and sandalled feet, just as if they were orthodox Catholic Christians." He laughed, and Angela was not even the slightest bit shocked. O Angela, Angela, you have already got very far from your convent teaching!

"What were you doing there?" she asked.

"Hunting up manuscripts, and trying to get into the tone of thought of these lamas, as the monks are called, and find out what they really think and believe."

"Did you succeed?"

"Pretty well on the whole,—considering. I found some valuable manuscripts; one of the lamas is now engaged in copying them out for me."

Then he described to her many strange scenes and adventures, and there never was flattery like Angela's listening; her eyes dilated with excitement, by some touch of expression she would show him how vividly she realised the scenes he spoke of. It would have been impossible not to talk well to such a hearer!

It was lucky that her horse was quiet and perfectly trained, for the riders were talking much too fast to pay the slightest attention to what they were doing or where they were going.

Suddenly as they came to the brow of

a hill Angela stopped short, and pointing with her whip handle to the landscape before them, said, "Look there; how beautiful!"

It was indeed a beautiful scene! In the foreground a bit of wild, forest scenery—stunted beeches with twisted, silver-grey trunks, and still clothed, late as was the season, with golden and reddish-brown foliage, tall bracken of all shades of amber and brown, and, in vivid contrast with the autumnal tints,—to which the yellow rays of the declining sun gave additional lustre,—clumps of holly, with its shining, dark-green leafage. Beyond, in the distance, was a Turneresque landscape—exquisite gradations of light and shade, and misty tints of violet and blue; distance beyond distance, shade melting into shade.

For several minutes Vivian and Angela gazed in silence, then she drew a long breath that was almost a sigh, and said, "To think that such a short time ago I fancied it almost wrong to delight in beauty as I do, and wished to shut myself up in a convent away from it all! I remember, at Liége, reading the life of St Francis de Sales, who kept his eyes fixed on the ground when he was travelling through beautiful scenery, that it might not distract his thoughts from heavenly meditations."

"Groveling idiot!" said Vivian. "Or rather, one should blame his school of thought, not the man himself, who was a very fine fellow, I believe. It seems to me positive blasphemy to treat in that way this beautiful, beautiful world God has put us in. Look there," he went on eagerly, "look at those

piles of cloud, what perfect form and colour, look at that light through the trees there, look at those jolly little rabbits playing in the sunlight; to think of any fool supposing he was given eyes to see it all, and capabilities to enjoy it, for no purpose ! ”

“ You might carry that argument still further,” said Angela. “ We all have aspirations towards perfect purity, yearnings for perfect happiness, which this world cannot satisfy ; therefore, unless they are destined to be reached and gratified somewhere, they are futile and purposeless.”

“ Yes, that in itself has always seemed to me a strong presumption in favour of the immortality of the soul, or rather of its continued individuality after death. Eternal

life!" he continued thoughtfully, "what is your idea of it?"

"To learn and to love," said Angela; "I can't imagine ever wearying of those two things. If one could only live for them truly, and get above all little temptations, and pettinesses, and trivialities, one might feel oneself walking in 'the light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.'"

"Child," he said, looking at her earnest face, "you don't know what it is to me to be with you. In spite of all failures and weakness—and, Angela, you little know how weak and stained I am—I have left such an inextinguishable longing after goodness and purity. You show me what it is my nature really yearns for"—

Angela flushed crimson; the conversa-

tion had taken a strangely intimate and personal tone ; perhaps it was as well that at this moment there was a sudden interruption.

CHAPTER II.

“By birth he ranked
With the most noble, but unto the poor
Among mankind he was in service bound
As by some tie invisible, oaths professed
To a religious order.”

WORDSWORTH.

A BOY of about ten years old emerged from a low cottage, or rather shanty, at the side of the road, and said with a burst of tears,

“Mother’s dead!”

“What?” said Vivian. “Can you hold my horse, Angel? I must go and see.”

He dismounted and followed the child into the cottage. A minute or two passed

before he appeared again, then he came to the door with a troubled face.

“Angel, here is a woman literally dying of starvation, I believe; no food, no fire, and a child ill of the croup. There is nothing in the cottage. I must have blankets, a bath, food, brandy, fuel, and a little medicine-chest which you will find in my room. Can you, will you ride home at once, and send them to me? It is getting dark, and I hate to let you go alone, but I can’t possibly leave either the woman or the child. It is only about a mile to the north gate.”

“I can go perfectly well alone,” said Angela, “I don’t mind in the least. I will have the pony-carriage, and bring everything back to you myself as quickly as possible.”

"Good child!" he said. "You will be able to think of much that is needed. Come as quickly as possible, and bring Peter with you, to take my horse. I may have to stop all night. I don't think it is more than a mile or so to the north gate. Take the first turn to the right, and go straight on."

Angela rode home fast, changed her dress rapidly, and by dint of coaxing old nurse, got all she wanted, and drove back again in the pony-carriage to the cottage. When she arrived there, Vivian met her at the door in his shirt sleeves. "I am glad you are come," he said, "I have put my horse in the shed at the back of the cottage. Simmons, will you kindly take him home, and let the boy stay with the ponies? I may be kept some time."

He helped Angela out, and she followed him into the cottage. It was a miserable, low room, with a flagged floor, and no furniture but one chair, and a pallet bed on which lay a woman almost as pale and rigid as though she were a corpse, beside her a child of about two years old, breathing with a curious, hoarse, brassy noise. Vivian had put his coat and waistcoat over them, and a fire burnt on the hearth, which, as he told Angela, he had made by tearing off some boards from the shed, and pulling up some stakes from the hedge.

"You have brought some coals, I hope," he said, "and my medicine-chest? That's right. I will go and bring everything in; but now we mustn't talk, for there is a great deal to be done."

"If you will tell me what to do I will carry out your instructions," said Angela.

"Well, first of all I want to get a little warmth into this poor woman. I will go and get the blankets, and whatever you have brought, and will you then cover her up, and rub her hands between your own?"

He returned in a moment or two with all the stores Angela had brought, remarking, "Good child, you have thought of everything. I have sent the little boy to the village to buy food and fuel, but in the meantime here is all we want. Now, pile blankets on the woman, please, and chafe her hands and feet; in the meantime I will give the child some medicine, and then afterwards you must put him into a hot bath. You have brought a

kettle, I see, that's right!" He disappeared rapidly outside, and returning with the kettle filled with water, put it on the fire; then he got out a bottle of medicine from his little chest and measured out a dose, and, wrapping the child in a blanket and carrying him over to the one chair by the chimney corner, cautiously and carefully administered the proper remedy, handling the child with all the tenderness and skill of experience. Meanwhile, Angela had covered the woman with blankets, and after heating one of them at the fire wrapped it round the poor creature's feet, and began to chafe the icy hands. They were so deadly cold, and the woman's face looked so set and livid, that the girl felt almost afraid it was all too late; but Vivian's quick, decided tone of authority

gave her confidence and hope while obeying his directions.

Presently he said, "Just come here, will you? The child must now be put into a hot bath, kept there for ten minutes, and then taken out and wrapped in blankets. If you will do this I shall be free to give my whole attention to the mother."

"Wait a minute, Vivian," said Angela, "wouldn't it be a good thing to send Peter, while he is waiting, for Mrs Taylor, the woman in the village who nurses sick people?"

"Of course it would," said Vivian. "I didn't know there was such a person; tell him to bring her back *with* him in the carriage."

Angela went to the door and gave the necessary directions; then coming back, took

the child from Vivian, and signed to him to attend to the mother. She undressed the little fellow quickly and gently, and put him into the bath, where the hot water was so pleasant that he stopped the hoarse, distressed wail he had begun when first moved from Vivian's arms; and, before the ten minutes were over, his breathing was tolerably natural and soft again.

Meanwhile Vivian had put some drops of a strong restorative between the woman's lips; at first she seemed unable to swallow, and there was an ominous rattle in the throat, but after a few minutes he succeeded in getting some of the liquid down, and she began to revive. He then fed her cautiously with brandy - and - water from a tea-spoon, and after a few minutes, the

life seemed to ebb back, and she even attempted to speak.

"Hush!" said Vivian, putting his finger on his lips, "don't speak. You will be better soon, and your child is doing beautifully." Then he warmed some strong gravy soup Angela had brought with her, and administered it to the exhausted woman very slowly and carefully, seeing with satisfaction that her strength seemed to revive with every spoonful. Angela was hushing the little child off to sleep. As Vivian glanced round he was reminded of some Dutch picture he had once seen of the Nativity.

At this moment, the little boy who had first called them opened the door. He was carrying a great basket, which he put down in his utter surprise at the changed

scene—his mother being fed by the strange gentleman, a fire burning on the hearth, and before it a lady nursing his little brother on her knees.

“Come in,” said Angela, “don’t be frightened. Vivian, the child is asleep, may I put him on the bed?”

“Here,” said the woman hoarsely. “God bless you,” she murmured, as Angela laid him beside her.

Then Angela made some tea, and soon they all looked quite a comfortable party in the ruddy firelight; the child sleeping quietly, the mother even able to sit up in bed and drink some of the tea, Tommy devouring great slices of bread-and-butter.

By the time Mrs Taylor arrived, the woman had dropped off to sleep, and

Vivian felt that there was no cause for further anxiety, and that he might safely leave both mother and child to the sick-nurse's care. He gave her a variety of minute directions of the treatment required by both mother and child, with orders that Tommy should be sent off to let him know at once, no matter at what hour of the night, if the croup came on again. Then he extracted all the information he could get out of Mrs Taylor as to who these people were, and how they came to be in this state of destitution ; and after promising to come early in the morning, and wishing her a courteous good-night, lifting his hat to her as though she were a duchess, he went out to Angela and the pony-carriage.

“ You must be very tired, you poor little

child," he said, as he helped her into the carriage, and wrapped the rug carefully round her. "What a splendid nurse you are; you have all your wits about you."

"I only had to do what I was told," said Angela; "there isn't much difficulty in that."

"Everybody doesn't do it," he answered; "if you only knew the amount of idiocy doctors see in sick-nursing. Besides, you know what to do without too much waste of time in telling you; you brought everything that could be needed, with a mere hint from me. Yes, Angel is a very good name for you, Heavenly Messenger:

'How oft do they their silver bowers leave,
That come to succour us that succour want,'

a blessed angel; 'God's Bird,' as old Dante says. However, to come back to

the matter in hand, I think we are well through with that business, don't you?"

"Yes, indeed," said Angela. "How lucky that we happened to be passing that way! But how does the poor woman come to be in that dreadful state? why, there was scarcely a bit of furniture in the room! And was it really *hunger*, absolute hunger, that was the matter?"

"Absolute hunger," said Vivian. "It appears that her husband is in gaol for poaching. She was too proud, I suppose, to ask for help, or come upon the parish, and she had been gradually pawning all her things for food; then, finally, when nothing was left, and she could get no credit, she walked over to Credisham to try and get some work she had heard of there, failed in so doing, and hunger, and

the long walk combined, brought her to this state of syncope in which we found her. At least, that is the gist of what I could get out of little Tommy and Mrs Taylor. We must see what is to be done for them to-morrow. I don't want to pauperise them, so we must try and find some way of enabling them to help themselves. I wonder when the man's time in gaol will be up. Are you very tired, my childie?" he added, with a soft intonation that thrilled Angela.

"No," she said, and then she added passionately,

"How dreadful that there should be such misery in the world, and we knowing nothing of it! I wonder Frank had not heard of this poor woman; she generally knows about all the cottagers."

"I fancy it is explained by the fact that these Evanses are strangers; they have only been settled here a very short time, otherwise dear little Frank, who does, I know, do all she can for the poor people about Crofton, would have heard of them."

Angela's heart was too full to speak, she felt an utter self-abasement and humiliation at her own life of uselessness to her fellow-creatures, mingled with a passionate admiration for Vivian. "How glad you must be to be able to help people like that," she said presently. "Most people would not have known what to do, and while they were sending for a doctor, the woman or the child might have died."

"Yes; I have never regretted my two years' study at Paris," he answered. "I

have doctored all kinds of queer people in all kinds of queer places."

By the time they got home it was more than half-past seven o'clock, and Mrs Willoughby, who had been kept waiting for her dinner, received them in a very aggrieved manner.

"Really, Vivian," she said, "if poor people are ill, I can't think why you don't get doctors and proper people to look after them, instead of keeping Angel out till this hour of the night."

"I am a doctor myself," said Vivian, laughing. "You wouldn't have had me send five miles to fetch Lamb, and leave the woman and child to die perhaps, meantime, when I flatter myself I did just as well as he could have done."

"Pshaw!" said Mrs Willoughby, crossly.

"You are *not* a doctor; don't talk nonsense."

Vivian was rather fond of teasing her, so when they were seated at the dinner-table, he began again: "Now, Marian, what did you mean by insulting me just now, and saying I am not a doctor? I am not an M.D., perhaps, but I am a very fair 'general practitioner,' and I have got my surgeon's diploma. If anybody wants an arm or leg taken off, I'm their man! I can cut people up beautifully!"

"Don't be so *disgusting*, Vivian," said Mrs Willoughby. "I don't wonder at your father being angry with you for going through those horrible hospitals. How any one can be a doctor, I can't imagine; a revolting profession!"

"A splendid profession!" said Vivian.

"The only one that unites scientific study and human interest. If it weren't because my father would nearly go mad if I did, I should settle down somewhere and practise regularly."

"Nonsense," said Mrs Willoughby. "Fancy a gentleman becoming a *doctor*! No one with refinement could endure such a profession."

"Thank you," said Vivian, with a bow to her, and laughing gaily. "Well, I shall expect to be struck off the list of your acquaintances when the day ever comes that I am a country doctor. *En revanche*, perhaps you will call me in some time when you want some one cheap; for, of course, I shan't be able to charge very high at first."

"Nonsense," said Mrs Willoughby again.

"By-the-by," with a sudden look of alarm, "you haven't told us what was the matter yet. I daresay it was some horrid infectious disease."

"No, not at all, only starvation and croup."

"Starvation!" was the general exclamation. So then the whole story was related, and Mr Willoughby remembered that he was one of the magistrates who had sentenced the man Evans to prison for poaching; and then the conversation took a turn to the question of poaching in general, and from that to an animated discussion about the game-laws."

Meanwhile, Angela and Frank were talking in a low voice. "I wanted to go to you when I heard where you were," said Frank, "but mamma wouldn't let me. What a

trump Vivian is! I do love him for the way he looks after people; he was always just like that," which words, for some unexplained reason, gave Angela a longing to kiss Frank affectionately.

Angela was very tired with her long ride and all the excitement and fatigue afterwards, so she went off to bed soon after dinner. Vivian was still discussing the game-laws with Mr Willoughby, but, as he saw her move, came quickly across the room, and said, "Go to bed and sleep well. Good-night, God's Bird!"

Angela felt the lingering clasp of his hand after she had left him; and when she got upstairs, and had shut the door of her room, walked up and down rapidly in a strange state of fevered excitement. He was so good, as well as so wise and clever. He

had such power in all directions. How clearly and decidedly, and yet how kindly and gently he had given his orders in the cottage! How tenderly he had nursed the child and mother, he who was, besides, man of the world, adventurer, poet, genius! She did not own to herself that she loved him in any other way than as a dear friend, but why did each modulation of his voice ring in her ears? why did she press against her breast the hand he had clasped? what was the meaning of this strange life that seemed to throb in every vein?

CHAPTER III.

"Alas ! how easily things go wrong,
A word too much, or a sigh too long ;
And then comes a dark and a driving rain,
And Life is never the same again."

G. MACDONALD.

ANGELA went downstairs the next morning with a curious feeling in her mind that something had happened, or was going to happen. At the breakfast-room door she met Vivian, and for some inexplicable reason they did not shake hands with each other, and felt a certain mutual constraint.

"I have been to see Mrs Evans," he said ;
"she is pretty well this morning ; some of

these labourers' wives really seem to me to have the constitution of horses ; a woman of our class, if she had recovered even from the state of absolute collapse in which this poor creature was yesterday, would have had a long illness to go through."

"How is the child ?" asked Angela.

"Not quite so well as last night ; I have told the mother what to do, and she is to send for me if the cough comes on again."

"Frank and I will walk over, then, after breakfast, and see him," said Angela. "You will come, won't you, Frank ?"

"All right," said Frank. "Pass Vivian's tea, please, Angel, unless you want two cups for yourself."

As the cup was passed, Vivian's fingers touched lightly and accidentally those of Angela ; a sudden, strange thrill seemed

to go through her, and both of them flushed slightly. He turned quickly away, and said to Mr Willoughby, "I saw you in the distance this morning, Squire, talking to the gamekeeper. I am going to have a go in at the pheasants some day this week; I heard such a lot of them 'kurrucking' as I came through the plantation this morning, that it seemed as if the poor things were begging somebody to come and shoot them."

Just then in came the post-bag. Mr Willoughby opened it and distributed the letters. "Two for me, one for Cecil; as usual, about ten for Vivian, and one of Harry's long rigmaroles for *you*, Miss Angel. What on earth do you two write about? The postman has asked for an increase to his salary ever since you became engaged, his bag is so much heavier!"

Frank clasped her hands tightly beneath the table, and when she next spoke her voice had gained a somewhat harsher tone. Vivian was apparently absorbed in his letters, but he did not fail to remark Angela's quick change of colour as her uncle went on teasing her about her love-letters, and a keen pain seemed to dart through him. He realised with sudden vividness that his brother was her affianced lover, and a demon of jealousy seemed to rise up within him. The night before he had almost determined to leave Crofton and Angela and temptation, but now that it was evident from her manner that she was in love with Harry, why should he force this pain on himself a minute sooner than it was necessary? There was no danger for her, thank God! Yes, Vivian *said* "Thank God!" to himself; but is it in

human nature not to desire a return of affection from the loved one, even though we may deny to our conscious selves that we do so?

After breakfast, Frank and Angela walked to the Evans' cottage; then they went on to the village school, where Frank was the great authority. Angela gave a singing-lesson to the children, and then walked home alone. Her meditations were of the confused nature of our thoughts when we let them drift at their own will, while outer influences, the swift tingling of the blood that exercise gives to healthy young limbs, the shapes of tree and cloud, all go to make up the sum of our consciousness. She was softly humming one of the *volkslieder* she had been teaching the children, and it took her thoughts back to one lovely evening last

summer, when she had gone out in a boat on the Neckar, and a party of students in another boat had sung that song. Then her mind drifted back to another evening, many years ago, when her father had taken her for a sail on the lovely bay of Spezzia. That reminded her of Shelley, whose beautiful letters from Italy she had been reading lately, and then she thought of some lines that had much struck her fancy in the "Prometheus Unbound," a wonderful description of the flight of the hours.

It was a windy day, and drifts of cloud were scudding across the sky; Angela looked up at the changing shapes, and it seemed to her that she could see indications of the curves and lines of the flying figures in swiftest motion imaged by the poet.

"What are you thinking about, signor-

ina?" said a voice close to her ; she started and looked round, Vivian was beside her.

"I was making pictures in the clouds," she answered, laughing.

He replied, with a melancholy look in his eyes,

"A fascinating occupation, but not a very safe one. The visions are apt to change and melt, and Ixion finds he has clasped empty air in his arms!" Then, as she looked at him in surprise, he went on in a different tone, "What were the cloud pictures?"

"Shelley's description of the flight of the hours."

"I don't remember it; repeat it, will you?"

Angela complied immediately ; her voice was very soft and musical, and would have made less sublime poetry sound beautiful :

“ ‘ Through the purple night
I see cars drawn by rainbow-wingèd steeds
Which trample the dim winds : in each there stands
A wild-eyed charioteer urging their flight.
Some look behind, as fiends pursued them there,
And yet I see no shapes but the keen stars :
Others, with burning eyes, lean forth, and drink
With eager lips the wind of their own speed,
As if the thing they loved fled on before,
And now, even now, they clasped it. Their bright locks
Stream like a comet’s flashing hair : they all
Sweep onward.’ ”

“ That is wonderfully beautiful,” said
Vivian.

“ Isn’t it? One can feel the wind of the
rapid motion; wouldn’t it be a beautiful
subject for a painter?”

“ I think I know a man who could paint
it,” Vivian answered.

“ I wish papa could have done so,” said
Angela. “ Poor papa!”

“ Did you love him very much?” said

Vivian tenderly, reading with quick sympathy the girl's longing to talk on the subject.

"Love him! He was all the world to me. My mother is only a beautiful, tender memory, but my father—I adored him, and oh, he was so good to me! It was such a sad death; because, I feel it now, his life had been a wasted one. That dreadful passion for gaming, it seemed to burn up all his powers. He might have been a great painter if he had only studied; and he had such a loving, warm, generous nature, and such a charm of manner."

"I wish I could have known him," said Vivian. "Tell me some more about him."

Angela was delighted to talk to so sympathetic a listener, and the subject lasted them till they got to the house. Then he asked

her to come to the library as soon as she had taken off her hat, saying he had something there to show her. When she went into the room, Vivian was opening a portfolio, out of which he extracted a highly-finished water-colour drawing, saying, "Now tell me what you think of that; it is the work of a friend of mine, the artist that I think capable of rendering Shelley's 'Hours.'"

The picture represented two figures, a man and a woman flying through the air clasped in one another's arms; the light drapery about her delicate limbs, and her long, black hair, floated in the stream of the wind; her expression was that of passionate, rapturous love.

For nearly five minutes Angela looked in silence, then with something almost like

tears in her eyes she said, "It is *very* beautiful. What is the subject?"

"Paolo and Francesca da Rimini. Yes, I think it is a fine idea; look at the clinging clasp of the two lovers, and the wonderful lightness of the floating figures. Every line is in harmony."

"Who was the painter?"

"Quite a young man, a Frenchman, a friend of mine. We were staying at Capri once together, living in an old, ruined tower, and I was stumbling through the 'Inferno' with the greatest difficulty, when I came to that exquisite bit about poor Francesca. It was like finding a lovely flower amidst the desolation of volcanic mountain scenery. I raved about it, and Paul said he would make a sketch of it for me, and three months afterwards sent me, not a mere sketch, but

this little gem. I wish you would read the lines to me," he went on. "It is my favourite bit in all Dante, and I do so love hearing poetry"—*especially in your voice*, he might have added, if he had expressed all his thought. He went and fetched a Dante, and finding the place, handed the book to Angela, who sat down and began to read—

“ ‘ Quèl giorno piu non vi leggemmo avante.’ ”

As she finished that line her voice died, and a sudden oppressive, faint sensation seemed to come over her. She could not look up, move, speak, think even! Was she Angela Willoughby or Francesca—guilty, miserable, happy, blessed Francesca? What a strange, dim, dreamy spell seemed to hover over her, that was not pain, not happiness, but

like the absolute suspension of conscious thought.

Have you ever seen water below the level of freezing temperature? While in perfect rest, it remains clear and undisturbed, but a touch of a feather will send the ice crystals shivering through it. It was just so with Angela; one word, one touch from Vivian, was all that was needed to crystalise into shape the love that filled her heart.

But to Vivian, Dante's lines came like a solemn warning. He had not thought before of the similarity of the position, now he felt with sudden vividness that *his* Francesca was here; by some strange *clairvoyance* her mind was to him as his own, he knew her thoughts and feelings as though he could read them in the open book. He dared not

look at her ; he neither moved nor spoke. Each felt an intense consciousness of the other's presence through every fibre of their being.

But Vivian was rousing his whole nature to an act of resistance. After a time had passed, a time short by actual moments, but long by the sum of their sensations, he spoke : " I will get the drawing framed for you, and you can hang it in your morning-room at the Priory—when you are *married*." He spoke the word quite quietly.

Every drop of blood had rushed from Angela's cheek. Involuntarily she put her hand to her throat, there was a dry, choking sensation there. Vivian saw the gesture ; it was hard to go on, but he had already drifted too far, it was time that both of

them awoke from that sweet, intoxicating dream.

“ I wonder if marriage will alter you,” he continued. “ Perhaps I shall find you changed into quite a prosaic English matron by the time I come back from India again.”

Still Angela could not speak ; he went on, deriving, as he spoke, a strange sort of pleasure in the torture he was giving himself and her, for he felt that every word was a stab to her.

“ Yes, you will be a county lady, presiding at hunt breakfasts and solemn dinner parties, and giving balls and archery meetings. Harry will like you to take the lead, and set the fashion to the neighbourhood. What can the heart of woman desire more than to eclipse her neighbours in her dresses and carriages and the splendour of her

entertainments? And you will be able to do it, I have no doubt."

"*Don't*," said the poor child, with a smothered cry of pain in the ring of her voice.

"What! not talk of your marriage?" he said in a bitter voice; "what more delightful topic? In a few weeks Harry will be here, and I suppose you will begin to think about settling something. I shall be best man, and give you both my blessing, and then it will be time for me to think of going out to India again; and when I come back, I have no doubt I shall see my little sister blossomed into a woman of fashion."

It was too much; Angela tried to speak, her voice choked, a sudden gasping sob broke from her, the tears that were brimming in her eyes overflowed, and, with a hurried

step, and trembling in every limb, she left the room.

Vivian sat still where she had left him, his face pale, his eyes gloomy. So at last the end had come !

CHAPTER IV.

“It is good to be merry and wise,
It is good to be honest and true,
It is good to be off with the old love
Before you are on with the new !”

ANGELA, in the shelter of her own room, burst into a fit of sobbing. “It is cruel of him, cruel of him !” she repeated. Gradually the sobs died away, and she began to awake as it were from some strange dream.

“What is the matter ? What am I crying for ?” she asked herself, but she was as yet too bewildered to be able to find any answer to the question.

Just then the luncheon gong sounded.

"I can't go down and meet him," she thought, "besides, what a state my eyes must be in; but what will he think if I am not there? Never mind, anything is better than meeting him just now. I must think; I must clear my mind a little."

She put on her hat and jacket, and went quietly down the schoolroom stairs and out by the side door into the park. Fresh air and exercise have always a calming effect, and in a short time the troubled waters of Angela's heart settled themselves, and she was able to look into their depths. What she saw there frightened her, for they reflected but one image. She who had accepted the love and life of another, was she untrue to her faith? Mechanically she took hold of the opal and diamond ring Harry had given her, and her mind flew

back to the day when he had put it on her finger, and she had repeated after him, "I love you, and I promise to be your wife."

"His wife! How can I now? But I am pledged!"

Inside the ring a motto was engraven, "*Treu und Fest.*" Angela took off the ring and examined it, as if by looking at the words she could impress them on her mind. "*Treu und Fest,*"—no, she was neither, but untrue and weak as water. She was standing on the bridge over the river just above the weir, looking down at the swirling, dark-brown stream as it rushed past, foaming against the old stone piers of the bridge, and sending a delicious, cool, fresh scent and spray into her bending face; in her hand she held the gleaming ring. Insensibly the rapid water entangled her brain in its

mazes of sound and motion ; thought faded away into a dreamy sensation, that some feeling stronger than herself, stronger than all past claims, had risen in her heart, and was bearing her away even as the river swept onward, and that it was idle to struggle against its mighty torrent. "I love him ; he loves me," the river seemed to say, and recollections of the mute confessions of his eyes, of the tender tones in his voice, rose to her mind and wrapped her as with a warm atmosphere of happiness and love. Her lips parted in a smile, and, at the same moment, her hand relaxed,—the ring went flashing down into the brown, rapid river.

With a quick gesture as though she could catch it, Angela stretched out her hand ; too late, of course. The sparkling diamonds of

the river had leapt up to welcome their sisters in the ring, the waters had closed over it,—it was gone.

“Oh, what *shall* I do?” cried Angela aloud. “How sorry Harry will be!”

The incident had roused her reason and will again, though it did just flash across her mind, “Perhaps it is an omen! My love has slipped like that out of my holding into the swift stream of Destiny.”

But she was angry with herself for the passing fancy. “I am not a leaf,” she thought, “to be swept about by the winds and waters; I am a rational human being with a will and soul, and I *will* be true, I *will* conquer myself. No, I don’t love him, I don’t, I don’t,” she repeated, as though she could annihilate the feeling by denying it. “I have been foolish, mad,

but I *will* not love him! He is so good and clever, I can't help admiring him, but I love Harry, I am going to be his wife. O God! keep me true!"

Then her thought took another turn. "What will he think of me? I daresay he despises me for those foolish tears to-day. I must have shown him what I didn't even know myself, that he should have thought it necessary to remind me that I am Harry's promised wife. His '*little sister*' he called me, but in what a bitter tone he spoke! Oh, it is worse than all if I have lost his respect! I deserve it, I suppose, but I won't do so any longer. I don't love him, I *will* not love him; I *will* be true; I will show him that he is wrong in what he thinks; I will avoid him, I will be quite cool and indif-

ferent with him. After all, he can't *know* anything! Know anything! There is nothing to know! What right has he to suppose that I care for him? After all, how do I know that he does think so? I said nothing to betray myself. If he asks me why I cried, I will give him some reason, tell him—anything, it doesn't matter what. I will make him see that I don't care for him. No, I don't, I don't."

Poor Angela! The hours passed by in this tumult of emotions, in reiteration that she was, she would be, true; and, underneath the waves of resolution, of affection, of honour, surged the tide of passion, the haunting remembrance of a glance, a touch, the ring of a voice that had taken possession of her whole nature.

The short, November day had drawn to its close, when Angela, tired with this mental struggle, but firmly fixed in her resolution, entered Crofton Hall again. She made her way straight to the school-room, and found the boys and children all gathered round the fire roasting chestnuts on the bars; there was no light but the red glow of the flickering flames.

"Holloa, Angel!" said Regie, "where have you been all day? No one knew where you were at lunch time!"

"I had a headache, I went out for a walk," said Angela. "Where's Miss Primrose?"

"Gone to tea at the Vicarage," was the answer. "Stop and pour out tea for us, will you, Angel?"

"Very well," she replied. "Take my

hat and things upstairs for me, will you, Nelly, like a good child?"

"I'll take off your boots for you," said Jim. "Here, sit down in the arm-chair. Now you look comfortable and jolly! I say, Angel, do you know I'm going out shooting to-morrow; isn't it a lark? Isn't Vivian a regular brick?"

"Did he ask for leave for you?"

"Yes, he persuaded the governor, and he's going to lend me a gun."

"I am *very* glad," said Angela heartily. "Ethel, don't put out your eyes reading by firelight; peel me a chestnut instead."

"Well, tell us a story then, Angel, *do!*"

"Oh yes, *do!*" chimed in a chorus of voices.

So Angela, after a few minutes of meditation, during which Jim and Maurice

rubbed their hands together in an ecstasy of anticipated gratification, proceeded to spin a romance out of her brain, which was worthy of her justly celebrated powers for story-telling. Then came the schoolroom maid with lights and tea, and the party gathered round the table was a very merry one. Angela, tired of conflict and resolution, felt all this light laughter a species of anodyne, and was glad to let herself float on the stream.

CHAPTER V.

“ Anger, Passion, and Blindness,
Yearning, Aching, and Fears,
With Faith and Duty gazing
With steadfast eyes upon Tears.”

ANGELA's heart beat rapidly as she entered the drawing - room just before dinner. Vivian was standing by the fire talking to Mr Willoughby; he did not look at her when she came in, and he carefully avoided meeting her eye during dinner. His manner was quite free and unembarrassed, but there was none of the constant appeal to her, to which she was accustomed. Evidently he was as

determined as she was to be cool and indifferent for the future.

Angela felt a little hurt, and was also miserable at the idea that he thought her in love with him, and was trying to cure her. She could not command her thoughts properly as she talked to her uncle ; her manner was shy and conscious ; her cheek flushed and paled alternately, and that curious, choking sensation came into her throat. It would have taken very little to have made her burst into tears.

Vivian looked rather pale, but he was one of those white - and - black men that have very little colour, so his paleness was in no way remarkable, and he talked with no appearance of mental disturbance.

“ Will you come over to Paris with me,

Frank?" he said. "I have had letters which will oblige me to go over to Paris in the course of a few days, I am afraid, Marian."

"What an undependable - upon creature you are," said Mrs Willoughby; "you never know your own plans for two days together! However, you must stop for another week, for Mr and Mrs Bosanquet and Lord Fitz Osborne have been asked to dinner on the twenty-third, on purpose to meet you."

Vivian compressed his lips together with a slight appearance of annoyance, then said, "What day is the twenty-third? Friday, isn't it? Oh, well, I daresay I can manage to stop till Saturday; of course I *must* if these people are coming to meet me. It is a long while since I have seen

Mrs Bosanquet. Is she as pretty as ever?"

"Prettier," said Mr Willoughby.

"Well, I never did see anything to admire in her!" replied his wife at the same moment.

Mr Willoughby and Vivian laughed.

"I think I have heard that remark before!" said Vivian. "What bad judges of beauty men must be, women always are so unable to discover what they find to admire!"

"Well!" said Mrs Willoughby, with a toss of her head, "I don't think it is very difficult to know what men will admire! A woman has only got to flirt outrageously, and they will all declare she is beautiful! I think Mrs Bosanquet's way of throwing her eyes about is quite disgraceful!"

"She has beautiful eyes," said Vivian, "and a very pretty little foot. Does she still wear those nice silk stockings and high-heeled shoes?"

"I am sure I don't know; I never looked at her stockings," said his cousin scornfully.

"I think she is very nice and pleasant," interposed Frank; "and I pity her, with all my heart, for being married to that man."

"I quite agree with you, Frank," said Vivian. "She is a very clever, agreeable little woman, and Mr Bosanquet is about as surly, ill-conditioned a brute as you would be likely to see!"

"At all events," said Mrs Willoughby, "she needn't let all the world know so plainly how little she cares for him, and how badly he treats her!"

"Oh no, of course not!" said Vivian with a sneer. "Her duty is to smirk and simper when he bullies her, and admire every word he says, and make all the world believe she adores him! Is he not her husband, and is not hypocrisy the first duty of woman?"

"She shouldn't have married him if she didn't care about him," said Frank. "It's her own fault."

"Of course, it's all her fault, poor child!" said Vivian. "Nothing is to be laid to the charge of the society which makes money and a fine place the *sumnum bonum* of happiness, or the mother who married her, when she was a baby in the schoolroom, to this man, whom every one knew to be a coarse, ill-tempered brute. Did any one ever hint that it was likely to be an unhappy

marriage for such a trifling cause? Oh dear, no! How could a woman be unhappy with a fine house in town, and a place in the country, a host of servants, and any number of carriages? Diamonds and an opera-box must be so soothing to a wounded spirit; they must make it quite worth while to be sworn at and abused from morning till night, and perhaps struck, too, occasionally!"

"No, I don't believe he's so bad as to lift his hand to her," said Mrs Willoughby.

"She told me herself that he had struck her once."

"Poor thing!" said Frank. "But she hadn't any business to tell you, all the same."

"Now, will you be so good as to tell me *why*?"

"Because she is his wife, and she ought to have more *pride*. She promised to love, honour, and obey him; and she ought to do it," said Frank, with the hardness of youth.

"It is a ridiculous promise to make, then!" he returned. "How can any one promise to love and honour for the future? You can't answer for your own feelings six months hence. I might as well promise not to have a headache next week! Besides, it is impossible to honour where honour is not due; I say nothing about love; and, as I said before, you can't answer for your feelings in the future."

"Don't tell me!" returned Frank. "People can, and ought, to keep their promises, or else they oughtn't to make them."

"You are very stern, Miss Frank," he

answered, rather sadly. "Flesh and blood is weak!"

"I don't believe in people making excuses of that kind," said Frank, decidedly. "They can do right if they like."

"Oh, we are getting on our old subject of argument again, are we, Frank?" he said, laughing. "Right! What is Right?"

"Oh, I know there's no such thing—according to you," said Frank.

"Custom and climate, most of it," he said, with a provoking twinkle in his eye. "Where I have been, it is considered the height of impropriety for a woman to show her face; whereas she walks about with bare feet quite unconcernedly. Here, on the contrary, the pretty little white feet must be covered up, or it is very shocking; but modesty is not a bit outraged at the sight of the face!"

"There is no use your arguing with *me*," said Frank, smiling. "Right is right, and wrong is wrong; and I don't care where it is."

"Quite a mistake, I assure you!" he returned. "There is no such broad, black line as you imagine; on the contrary, it is a very wavering, variable division, and it makes all the difference whether you happen to be born in the ninth century or the nineteenth, or in the Tropics, or in the north of Scotland!"

"I don't care!" said Frank. "You may talk till you're black in the face, and you won't convince me that there is no such thing as Right and Wrong!"

He laughed, and the habit of constant appeal to Angela's sympathy was too strong for him. He looked across at her,

and met a glance of amusement in her eyes.

"You can't overcome *Frank* by your paradoxes," she said.

It was strange to Angela how completely she always felt that she and Vivian were thinking in some language of their own that was unintelligible to the outer world. She knew, as well as if he had said it, that he was playing with the amusement of seeing Frank's instinctive good sense rise superior to sophistical arguments which she could not refute, and Vivian knew too that she understood him.

This little incident seemed rather to break the ice between Vivian and Angela; they talked to each other for the rest of dinner-time, and she went upstairs feeling happier. The gentlemen sat late over their wine, and

when they adjourned to the drawing-room Vivian did not, as usual, go over to the piano. He took up a book and threw himself into a chair, while an expression of sickened weariness came over his face. Angela was asked to sing, and some of her pent-up excitement found relief in the action ; she had never heard herself sing so well before. Now and then she fancied she caught Vivian's eyes fixed on her, but, if so, he always averted them as soon as he saw she was observing him.

At last he rose abruptly, saying, " I really ought to do some work to-night, as I am going to shoot to-morrow. Will you excuse me, Marian ? "

" Certainly," said Mrs Willoughby. " Don't make yourself ill by sitting up all night. I will send you up some tea. Good-night."

He said a general good-night to all the others and escaped, breathing a deep sigh of relief when he was out of the room.

To be with her now was torture; all pleasure in it was gone! He knew she loved him, and it was maddening to be near her and to have to crush back all his love for her.

Sleep did not attend Angela's pillow that night. Over and over again went the weary round of longing, combat, resolution, only it had taken rather a different turn from the struggle of the afternoon. She acknowledged more plainly to herself what she felt for Vivian, and she was more anxious to make him think that she did not feel it. Only there was not much chance to do so; he avoided her so determinately, and, in fact,

he was evidently bent on showing *her* that he cared nothing for her!

At last, worn out and weary, she dropped off to sleep, and did not awake till the breakfast gong sounded. When she went downstairs, Frank was waiting to pour out her tea; all the other places were vacant.

"Vivian and the boys have gone out shooting," said Frank. "Make haste with your breakfast, Angel, I want you to come to the school with me before we go to Lady Lorraine's."

"Why to Lady Lorraine's?" asked Angela wearily.

"Why! don't you remember, child? We said we'd go there to luncheon. You never can think of anything now but those old books that Vivian is always talking about!"

When the girls returned home in the afternoon they found the shooting party just coming in, apparently in high good-humour. True to her resolution, Angela went straight upstairs to her own room, disregarding Jim's outcries to come and look at his bag. Frank stopped on the stairs, and Angela heard all the laughing descriptions that were given to her—Vivian's voice as gay and fluent as any other of the party.

A hurt, angry, wounded feeling seemed to strike her. How *could* he be so bright and unconcerned when she was miserable? She sat down on a chair and stamped her little foot impatiently up and down, while tears came into her eyes as she looked out of the window at the dreary garden below. The dead leaves strewed about

the path; the river rolling with a sullen noise; the wind blowing the bare, wet branches of the trees.

Meanwhile, Vivian was seated on the lowest step of the stairs tugging at his wet shooting boots, which seemed glued to his feet, and talking to Frank.

"My dear Frank," he said, "will you kindly write a note for me to Mr Griffiths?"

"What for?" said Frank, in surprise.

"To say that I wish to return thanks in church on Sunday for a 'great mercy vouchsafed to me.' That is the correct way to put it, isn't it?"

"What was the mercy? You're very wicked, Vivian," said Frank.

"Wicked! I only wish to show proper gratitude. Don't you call it a mercy that

I am here alive when Jim would climb through the hedges with his gun loaded and at full cock, and the muzzle pointed at me!"

"Oh walker!" said Jim.

"It's as true as gospel, Frank," said Regie; "however, one thing is, he never shot anything when he pointed at it; did he, Vivian?"

"Just look here; what are these, then?" cried Jim, holding up some birds.

"Oh, you didn't shoot those; Vivian shot them."

"You forget though, Regie," said Vivian, "Jim wasn't aiming *intentionally* at me, otherwise I shouldn't have been so much alarmed. It's most exciting work going out shooting with Jim,—beats pig-sticking all to fits!"

"It's rather lucky you're all home safe, considering," remarked Frank.

"Wait a minute," said Regie, "you haven't heard the end of the story yet, Frank! Oh, Jim did make such a splendid bag! He shot a rabbit, a little pig, and a boy! He did really! It is frightfully expensive going out with him, for we had to pay five shillings for the pig, and give half-a-crown more to the boy!"

"Was the boy hurt?"

"Not enough to do him any harm," replied Cecil; "he wouldn't have minded being shot at every day at the same price."

"The worst part of the business was apologising to Norris," said Vivian. "I had to keep soothing him down all day, and there was a continual undercurrent of grum-

bling: ' There he goes again ! Blazing away !
Frightening the birds and making them so
shy there will be no getting anigh them,'
&c., &c. By the way, Frank, isn't there
a meet to-morrow ? "

" Yes, at Friarswood. Are you coming ? "

" If your father will give me a mount."

" Of course he will ! That's right, Vivian !
I haven't been out hunting with you since
I used to ride poor little Gipseey, and wear a
scarlet habit."

CHAPTER VI.

“ For, how hard it seem’d to me,
When eyes, love-languid thro’ half tears, would dwell
One earnest, earnest moment upon mine,
Then not to dare to see ! When thy low voice,
Faltering, would break its syllables, to keep
My own full-tuned,—hold passion in a leash,
And not leap forth and fall upon thy neck,
And on thy bosom (deep-desired relief !)
Rain out the heavy mist of tears, that weigh’d
Upon my brain, my senses, and my soul ! ”

TENNYSON.

THE next morning Vivian appeared at the breakfast-table in pink. He looked very handsome and picturesque, and his brow was quite unclouded as Angela, from the window, saw him ride away.

"There is no struggle for him," she thought. "Oh, why, why, *why* did he come here and make me so wretched?—I love him!—I love him! And I am nothing to him,—I never can be anything!"

The desire to show her indifference, even her resolution to conquer her love for him, was rapidly merging into a craving longing for one of his old looks of tender admiration. "If only he would read and talk to me, as he used to do, I could bear it all!" she thought. "I could get to love him only like a friend—in time. But now he is going away, and I shall never see him again!"

She tried in vain to settle to any occupation all day; all were alike irksome and distasteful. It was better to be moving than sitting still, however; so in the afternoon she walked

to the Evans' cottage. There Mrs Evans entertained her by an account of how, as soon as her "man's" time in gaol was up, Mr Vane was going to pay their passage to Australia, where there was plenty work to be got.

"He's a dear, good gentleman, that's what he is!" said the good woman. "And you too, Miss, begging your pardon, and leastways not a *gentleman*, but angels you both was to us the other night. Mr Vane he come here, and he talks as pleasant,—plays with Marty, and says, 'I beg your pardon, Mrs Evans, for interrupting your washing,' says he, just as if I was the queen herself! but there, Miss, what's the good of talking? Didn't I see the way he looked at you? just as if he would like to kiss the ground you stepped on!—Excuse me one

moment, if *you* please, Miss, I want to hang these things out to dry," and Mrs Evans disappeared, rather alarmed at her own temerity.

It was nearly dark by the time Angela got home again. She could not take her work or a book and sit down, like a rational creature, by the drawing-room fire ; but, after wandering about for a little, like an unquiet ghost, established herself at the window of the North Gallery, from whence she could command a view of the avenue.

Presently she heard the sound of horses' feet, and, looking out, saw Vivian and Frank riding up together. The colour flushed into her face, then died away ; a kind of sharp pain seemed to go through her heart. She was so unused to suffering like this, that she felt almost a curiosity as to what new pang

would torture her. Then she heard them come in, and Vivian's step on the stairs. There was only a faint light in the gallery; as Vivian suddenly caught sight of Angela he gave a great start, "Good gracious! how you frightened me! I thought it was a ghost."

"The ghost of the nun!" said Angela, with a faint laugh.

"Why do you sit here, in the dark and cold?" he said, trying to scan her face by the dim light. "Go down to the fire, like a good child!"

"You're extremely kind!" said Angela, bitterly. "I can take care of myself, thank you!"

Poor Angela! where had her pride and dignity gone to?

"Why do you speak like that?" he said,

approaching her. "Are you angry with me, child?"

"Angry? No; what should I have to be angry for?"

"Well, *please* don't sit up here! Come," he said, taking her hand. "Poor little hand, how cold it is!"

Angela pulled it away angrily. "What business have you to take my hand? Let me pass, please," and she almost ran away from him. She went to the schoolroom and stayed there till time to dress for dinner, reading a story-book to Ethel and Nelly.

Frank came in to her cousin's room on the way down to dinner. "Where have you been, Angel?" she asked. "We've had such a jolly day! Vivian and I were the only two in at the finish. Come along down to dinner; I'm so hungry!"

"Stop a minute, Frank, and let me do something to your hair," said Angela.

Frank, pretty well accustomed to being caught and dressed by Angela, submitted with tolerable resignation to having herself embellished by some of those little finishing touches without which dress is so ineffective, and then Angela suddenly clasped her cousin in her arms.

"Kiss me, Frank!" she said. "You do love me a little, don't you?"

"Of course I do," said Frank, in surprise. "What is the matter, Angel? you've been crying to-day!"

"No, no, I've got a headache, I think, —that's all. Come away, Frank."

There was a craving for sympathy in her mind, mingled with a great dread that Frank should discover her secret. At

the dinner-table there were lights and laughter, and much talk about the day's sport.

"Such a capital run!" began Frank.—Let any one who has stayed in a country house during the winter imagine the conversation. Every part of the run was talked over, the riding and the horses of every one out commented on,—everybody was eager and animated; everybody but Angela, to whom much of the talk was unintelligible, as well as uninteresting, and who felt thrown out in the cold by her want of comprehension.

"Such beautiful weather it was, too!" said Vivian; "there is nothing like the climate of dear old England after all. I can appreciate it after having been alternately roasted and frozen for the last two years."

“Frozen!” repeated Mrs Willoughby,
“In India?”

“You may even be frozen in India,” he said, laughing, “if you go to the right places ; but I was thinking of where I was last year in Thibet.”

“What sort of a climate is it?” asked Mr Willoughby.

“The apotheosis of east winds,” he answered. “A cloudless sky, a burning sun, and a biting, bitter wind, compared to which the worst east winds of an English spring are as balmy zephyrs!”

“What an infernal climate it must be!”

“Exactly, that is just what it is, an infernal climate and country. Fancy dreary wastes of gravel, an atmosphere of extraordinary clearness, blinding glare of the sun, hot

enough to give one sunstroke in the morning, and, in the afternoon, a wind that cuts the very marrow in one's bones. I used to think of Shelley's lines :—

‘Bright Reason shall mock thee,
Like the sun in a wintry sky.’”

As he said this, involuntarily he looked across the table at Angela—no one else was likely to appreciate a quotation from Shelley. He met her eyes, and in them, quite unconsciously to herself, was a look of pitiful pleading. It went to Vivian's heart, and his love for her seemed to rise up like “a giant refreshed with wine.” Good God! what terrible fate was this, that compelled him to hurt the creature he loved best on earth? for he knew well how much he hurt her by his cold, indifferent manner. Her heart was

as some instrument on which he could play at will.

She turned away her head quickly, and spoke to her uncle, but Vivian had not mistaken the expression of her eyes. His marked avoidance of her, and formal manner to her, had had the effect, not only of showing her plainly the nature of her feeling for him, but of strengthening and intensifying that feeling, and turning it to a burning and consuming fire.

Vivian was unable during the rest of dinner to carry out the line of conduct he had marked out for himself. He was very silent, and, when he held open the door for the ladies to pass out, his eyes sought Angela's—sought them, and met them. Straight into each other's souls they seemed to look, and what a tragedy there was

in that one glance! A drowning man might have looked at her like that, or some dumb animal in torture, so full of pathetic pleading were those dark eyes. Angela felt them to her very heart; she went up to her room, and threw herself on her knees by the bed, while a gasping sob broke from her, and the scalding tears forced their way through her fingers. She dared not meet that glance again; so ringing her bell, sent down a message by the maid that she had had a bad headache and had gone to bed.

O blessed headache! What should we women do without it? so often does it stand as excuse for heartache!

The next day was Sunday. Vivian went to the village church with the rest of the family, Angela to the little chapel in the

park. When she got there she tried to pray, but her heart was not in her prayers. For what was she praying? that she might be true to Harry? Too late for that. She was not going to be false to him in *deed*, if she wished to, even, she had no chance of it; and, as to praying for help against her love, she might as well pray that she might live without breathing! Then she roused her whole strength, and tried to renew her resolution to tear this passion from her heart. In vain! she could not. At last she threw herself on her face on the cold stones, and sobbed out a vague, passionate prayer for mercy and strength, that she might *do* right, at least; be less selfish, and bear her trouble somehow; and then she prayed for him that he might not suffer, might go away and

forget her, if to think of her gave him pain; and, even as she said it, she felt what the French call a *serrement de cœur*, at the thought of how near that parting was.

What fierce conflict of emotions tore Vivian's heart too, as the old rector droned through the service! What a terrible war between passion, pity, the longing for the heaven he had just to enter, and honour, duty, and right. He was deadly pale, and his face was set as he leant back in a corner of the old family pew. He did not doubt for a moment where duty lay. Should he do his brother, who loved and trusted him, the deadliest wrong one man can do another? Never! And Angela—poor, sweet child—she would forget in time. She suffered now, he could

see that, but the pain would not last for long. She had loved Harry, she would love him again; this was but a flash of girl's romance. He blamed himself for having won her affections, and then he exonerated himself; it had been so unintentional, it was the fruit of sympathy of nature. "‘There is no God but Allah. It is Destiny,’ as my friend Mehemet Ali says. Yes, it is Destiny. If I had come home a year ago, as I intended, we should have met and loved, and all would have been well. How happy we should have been together!" And then he went off into a dream of the "might have been," a sweet, foolish, dangerous dream. "Fool that I am to think of that now! No, it is too late, too late, and I must try and forget her, that is all. It becomes harder

and harder every day that I am with her! If it were not for this cursed dinner-party I would go away at once, but I must keep up appearances. I shall run up to town to-morrow, at all events, and, in the meantime, I must be careful, for her sake more than my own."

CHAPTER VII.

“ She was one
Made but to love, to feel that she was his
Who was her chosen : what was said or done
Elsewhere was nothing. She had nought to fear,
Hope, care, nor love, beyond, her heart beat *here*.”

BYRON.

THE slow days, the weary nights, had worn themselves away, and the 28th had come at last. Slow and weary did I say? No, but too, too fast had they gone; for to-morrow Vivian was going, and what would be the dreary blank?

Angela told herself that this torture of seeing him, so near and yet so far, was worse than anything; that, when he was

gone, she would be better able to conquer herself. Reason, faith, and her affection for Harry would be no longer overwhelmed by this bewildering, torturing delight, this glamour of his presence. But, behind this, lay a terrible dread of his departure, away to India, to danger, to excitement; while she would be left with this hopeless craving to bear for all her life. At least it was something that he should touch her hand in the morning and at night, that she could hear his voice, be under the same roof with him, sometimes even see in his eyes a look of pain and of love, which flatly contradicted his cold speech to her, and systematic avoidance of her. And yet she was hurt by the almost marked neglect with which he now treated her. She was too unhappy by this time to feel angry, she seemed to have no

more spirit left for that, but, when he spoke to her, sometimes formally, sometimes sarcastically, it seemed as though an inward wound were bleeding.

Well, that was all over now ! To-morrow he was going.

Angela was in the library, curled up in an arm-chair before the fire, pretending to read. Vivian was in town, and was not coming back till the 6.30 train. No one else ever came into the library. She could be sure of solitude here till it was time to dress for dinner, and then would come the evening of acting—put-on smiles, forced conversation, pretended interest in the vapid talk of the hunting squire or insipid curate, who would sit next her ; and then would come the “good - night,” and then another night of sleepless pain, and then, to-morrow, and

Vivian was going, and then—a whole life away from him. And Angela suddenly threw herself on her knees, buried her face in the cushions of the chair, and burst into a passion of sobs and tears.

Outside, the wind moaned, and the rain beat against the window-pane, while the twilight of the short November day was fast darkening.

Inside, one end of the great room was almost dark, the marble Venus dimly gleaming through the shadows ; but, at the opposite end, the ruddy firelight flickered on the rows and rows of books, the cases of gems, the polished oak floor, the high, carved mantelpiece, and the folds of Angela's dress, and the coils of her hair, as she knelt with her back to the flames, her face hidden in the chair, her whole body shaken with sobs.

She did not hear the steps approaching her, till suddenly a voice—*the* voice—was in her ears.

“Angel, my child! what is the matter? Why do you cry so terribly?”

Vivian knelt down beside her, and drew one hand away from her face. Another convulsive sob broke from Angela. Vivian pressed the hand he held to his cheek, and said, in a tone of the greatest distress,

“Hush, my darling! For God’s sake, calm yourself! You will be ill!” His arm was round her now, he kissed repeatedly the hand he had seized.

“Let me go!” said Angela in a smothered voice; “it is nothing; I shall be better directly; let me go!” and she struggled like some captive wild animal against the arm that was round her.

"No, no," he said, pressing closer to her, and speaking almost in a whisper; "no, my darling, why should you go? Why are you so unhappy, my child—tell me?"

"You know," she said, trying to free herself; "I am miserable, oh, do leave me,—let me go. I must go!"

"No, you must not. Don't cry, my sweet one!" he said. "Why are you so unhappy, Angel, tell me?"

"Oh, you are cruel to torture me like this!" gasped out Angela, brokenly. "Tomorrow you are going, let me go now!"

"I am *never* going from you," he said, "if you will only tell me to stop. Child—darling—love,—I love you! I worship you! I adore you!" He drew her into his arms. Poor child! she felt it her only

home on earth, but still she struggled against the bewildering, magnetic spell.

"Oh, *do* let me go, Vivian!" she entreated wildly. "It is wrong—let me go!"

He still held her close.

"Angel," he whispered, "do you love me?"

"You know I do!" she answered in a tone of despair.

"Then you are mine—mine—mine! Don't flutter so, little bird, we belong to each other now!"

Yes, it was true! She *belonged* to him. With every fibre of her being she felt it; how could she fight against this overpowering charm? She yielded to his embrace, and let herself be drawn close, closer to his breast, while he whispered in her ear, as his cheek was laid to hers,

"My own, own love!" and then their lips met in a long kiss. What a delirious tide of joy swept over Angela! She could not think, scarcely breathe. Conflict, misery, unhappiness, were behind and before her, but now, now was unutterable bliss.

Just then a boy's voice was heard in the corridor, "Vivian, *Vi-vi-an*, where are you?"

A muttered exclamation of wrath broke from Vivian. "I must go," he said. "We will talk to-morrow; love me, my darling, love me; you are mine, my own, my soul, my heart. No man shall take you from me now." He kissed her passionately, her lips, her eyes, her hair, her hands, then tore himself from her, and went out just in time to meet Regie at the door.

"Holloa, Vivian! Here you are!" ex-

claimed the boy. "I have been hunting for you all over the house. Didn't you hear me?"

"Rather!" was the answer. "You made noise enough to wake the dead! What is it?"

It was with a tremendous effort that Vivian controlled himself sufficiently to speak collectedly in a tolerably steady voice, but he was trembling violently. Fortunately the corridor was dimly lighted and Regie preoccupied, so that his cousin's pale face and agitated manner passed unremarked.

"Come along and see the dog Harry has sent me—a St Bernard. Such a beauty!"

"Very well—all right—in a minute," said Vivian. "Just let me go for a minute now, I will come directly."

"It's only in the schoolroom, come along!" insisted Regie; but Vivian, taking no notice of him, pushed past him, ran down the stairs to the side hall, took his hat from a peg, opened the glass door, and went out into the rain and the darkness. Regie, who had followed, watched him in the most utter amazement.

"Upon my word, I think he must be a little touched in his head!" he said reflectively.

"Who?" said Frank, appearing from the schoolroom.

"Vivian. I think he's cracky. I wanted him to come and see the dog, and he rushed off out in the rain, without saying a word, just like a maniac."

"When did he come in?" inquired Frank,

"I thought he wasn't coming till half-past six."

"He came back by the afternoon train."

"And where's Angel?"

"I don't know, I want to show her the dog. Isn't he splendid, Frank?"

"Yes, he's a fine fellow, but I must go now, Regie, and look at the dinner-table to see if the flowers are all right. I wish I could find Angel, she is such a good hand with flowers."

"Who's coming to - night?" asked Regie.

"Oh, a lot of people. Mr. and Lady Ida Hamilton, the Bosanquets, Lord Fitz Osborne, and a crowd more. Twenty people. Six o'clock, Regie, I declare! Let me pass."

"I wonder where Vivian has gone to!"

continued Regie in a meditative tone.
"It's pouring with rain."

"Well, it's his own look-out if he likes to catch cold," said Frank; "I suppose he's old enough to take care of himself.— I am not so sure that he is," she thought as she walked away.

Meanwhile Angela was still in the library gazing into the fire. She hated herself, she dared not think of the future, but, in spite of the bitter drop that was in it, what cup was ever so intoxicatingly sweet as that which had just been held to her lips! She loved, oh, how she loved him! Every feeling paled in the burning fire of that love. She could not think, she was in a dream that was like that of the opium-eater, passionately happy, yet miserable at the same time, his words of

"Yes—no, to the South Sea Islands or somewhere," he answered; then, as she looked at him with surprise, "I *beg* your pardon, Mrs Bosanquet, coming down by the express has confused my mind, I think; you see I am not used to civilisation yet. Yes, I have been to town."

He ventured to look across the table after Mrs Bosanquet had become engrossed with her soup. Yes, Angela was on the opposite side a little way down, beside her a short man with an eye-glass, who was endeavouring to attract his attention.

"How are you, Vane?" said this individual. "Couldn't speak to you before. Years since we met, isn't it? not since we were at Simla together."

"How are you, Carey? who would have thought of seeing you here?" responded

Vivian in cordial tones. "Where are you quartered now?"

"Credisham," was the reply. "Thanks, yes, turbot," and, as Captain Carey helped himself to the sauce, Vivian and Angela stole one short look at each other. She was looking wonderfully beautiful, her eyes large and bright as stars, the cloudy tulle of her dress framing her radiant loveliness. Her cheeks felt burning, her hands and feet cold as ice, her mouth so parched and dry that she could scarcely speak, her brain dizzy. The table with its lights and flowers seemed to dance before her; the buzz of voices sounded, now far off and muffled, now jarringly loud and near. Fortunately it did not require much effort of intellect to talk to her neighbour, Captain Carey. He seemed peculiarly well-pleased with himself, his eye-glass, his long

moustaches, and everything that was his ; and chatted away about his regiment, his doings, his horses, his family, his opinions, and his character, with much good-nature and self-satisfaction.

“ Vivian Vane and I were in the same regiment once,” he remarked at last, and this time Angela’s “ Yes ? ” was not one of simulated interest. “ What an awfully clever fellow he is ! ” he went on. “ Upon my word, I believe there is nothing he can’t do ! He’s a splendid rider, and a good shot, and no end of a swell at literature and classics, and all that, and he’s a thorough good fellow into the bargain.”

Angela felt quite friendly towards the little man.

“ He was just the life and soul of the regiment while he was in it,” continued Cap-

tain Carey ; "we were all as dull as ditch-water after he went away. By Jove, what larks we used to have in those days !"

He prattled on, and, while he kept to this topic, Angela felt no difficulty in giving him her attention ; but soon he returned to the more congenial subject of himself, and then her ears would strain themselves in the endeavour to catch a word here and there of what Vivian was saying.

He seemed to be paying great attention to Mrs Bosanquet. She flashed her blue eyes, white shoulders, and pearly little teeth at him, and Angela began to agree cordially in her heart with the opinion Mrs Willoughby had pronounced on those proceedings. At last the dinner came to an end. Ladies were fitting on their gloves, evidently meditating flight. Mrs Willoughby exchanged

the mysterious signal with Lady Ida Hamilton, Captain Carey dived under the table for Angela's gloves, pocket-handkerchief, and fan, there was a general rise, and the ladies sailed out of the room.

In the drawing-room there were the usual general remarks on the change of temperature, and then the elder ladies settled into discussions about babies, servants, and governesses, and the young ones looked over photograph books, yawned, and talked about the hunt ball.

Mrs Bosanquet was sitting a little apart, she rarely took the trouble to talk to ladies. Angela drew a chair near her. In the first place she had been talking to Vivian, apparently interesting him and being interested herself, and besides, there was in her eyes a sad, tired look which Angela interpreted by

the conversation she had heard about her, and which filled her heart with pity.

"Do you care to look at these photographs which Mr Vane brought from India?" she said.

"Thank you," said Mrs Bosanquet, smiling sweetly. "I like to look at the photographs, and I like still more to make acquaintance with you. It seems so curious that I should never have met you before, and I am determined, now I do see you, that we shall be friends, *real* friends."

Angela felt rather astonished at this sudden declaration, but Mrs Bosanquet talked as if she meant what she said.

"I have heard of love at first sight," she replied smiling, "but not of friendship."

"Haven't you?" said Mrs Bosanquet. "All my friendships are made at first sight,

or not at all. I flatter myself I am not mistaken in the story I can read in people's faces, and I see that there is sympathy between us. Don't you believe in sympathy?"

"Indeed I do," replied Angela, emphatically. "I quite agree with you that one can feel a strong attraction or repulsion at first sight. Some substances can never mix, others rush together instantaneously."

"Exactly," said Mrs Bosanquet, "that is what Goethe says in the 'Wahlverwandschaften.' He is speaking of *love*, but it is true in a minor degree in friendship. Do you read Goethe?" she asked suddenly, "I know you are a wonderful linguist."

"I have read 'Egmont,' and the shorter poems," replied Angela; "nothing else."

"Do come and read with me, will you?"

went on Mrs Bosanquet, in a pleading tone. "Come and read 'Faust' with me. I love to read with some one; I give up all books in disgust when I have to read alone. Mr Vane used to read with me once. We read 'Wallenstein' I remember. Do you know it?

'Ich habe genossen das ir dische Glück,
Ich habe geliebt und gelebt.'

Do you remember that?"

Angela began to feel as if there were something uncanny about this little woman. Why, in Heaven's name, did she choose such subjects of conversation, as if she could read her companion's inmost thoughts? At the same time she was conscious of being strongly attracted.

"I should like to read with you," she answered impulsively, "and I am *sure* we can be friends."

"You are good as well as lovely," said Mrs Bosanquet, just touching Angela's arm with the tips of her fingers. "Come and see me soon, and don't believe what people will tell you about me here. I am a sort of Loki in Asgard, in this prim county," she added laughing.

The conversation was interrupted by Mrs Willoughby's voice requesting Angela to play. The girl went to the piano accordingly, and played the march from Tannhäuser, the grand swell of sounds and mighty chords seeming to relieve a little her excited brain.

Before she had finished, the door opened and the gentlemen trickled in. She was at the further end of the long drawing-room with her back to the door, but she *felt* one of the steps; her heart seemed

to give one great leap, and then to stand still. Vivian did not come near her, however. He talked to Mrs Bosanquet and Lord Fitz Osborne for some time, and then sang duets with a Miss Chandos, who had a fine soprano voice. At last the evening was over; the "good-nights" were said, the carriages rolled away, and Vivian and Mr Willoughby returned from the hall door where they had been seeing their friends off. Frank had as usual seized the first opportunity of going to bed. Mrs Willoughby was standing on the staircase, silver candlestick in hand.

"Good-night, everybody," she said with a little yawn. "I am much obliged to you for your singing, Vivian. How shamefully you did flirt with Mrs Bosanquet, to be sure!" and Mrs Willoughby moved languidly upstairs.

“Good-night, my child,” said her uncle to Angela. “Vivian, I suppose you won’t be in bed for the next two hours at least; you will find brandy and soda water in the smoking-room, but I shall not join you to-night, for I’m dead asleep;” and he followed his wife. Vivian and Angela were left standing alone.

“Good-night, my darling,” he said. “Try to sleep;—don’t think—we will talk of everything to-morrow.”

“How can I help thinking?” said Angela passionately. “O Vivian! I am so happy, and yet so utterly miserable!”

“Do you love me?” he whispered.

“I love you with all my heart and soul,” she answered; “but what *can* I do, what *can* we do?”

“My darling, I can’t think of it to-night,”

he replied wildly. "Go now—leave me now—we will think and talk to-morrow. I am not calm enough now. I am not master of myself."

He pressed his lips on her arm, they felt burning hot. "Try to sleep, darling. Don't sit up. Don't think."

"*Sleep!*" she repeated. "I don't think there is much chance of that!"

"But you must try," he said, holding her hand clasped between his as he spoke. "Go to bed at once. Obey me now, my child."

How sweet that word *obey* is to a woman from the lips of a man she loves. It sent a thrill of new, strange delight, through Angela.

"Very well," she said. "Good-night."

"Good-night, God bless you, my treasure."

"Be happy to-night. Don't think. I will think for you."

The sound of an opening door made them start asunder. Angela went quickly to her own room, Vivian to the smoking-room. He threw himself into a chair by the table, and buried his face in his arms. His brain was throbbing wildly.

"I suppose there would be no getting out of this house now without kicking up the devil's own row," he thought. "What an infernal practice it is, this locking up all the doors every night! I would give a kingdom for a midnight gallop now, such as I used to have at Muzrabad, or at least for a walk and some air."

Presently it struck him that though it was impossible to get out of the doors, as the butler kept all the keys of them, he might

manage to scramble down from the window of his own room. He accordingly went there, measured with his eye the distance to the ground, and leaped out. For hour after hour he paced up and down the avenue. He never smoked, so the soothing effects of tobacco were unknown to him ; but the night air, the cold, bright starlight, and the monotonous exercise gradually soothed him, till he was calm enough to *think* with fixed intensity.

At last, utterly weary and exhausted, he returned to the house, climbed up to his window by the help of the ivy, threw himself on his bed, and fell into a heavy sleep.

Meanwhile Angela, in obedience to his command, had undressed and gone to bed ; but to sleep was another matter. It was very well to say "Not to think ;" but she

had to think. All night she tossed about, her heart filled with a tumult of remorse, pity, unhappiness, and love. The last, however, bore down all before it; there was no use struggling against such a torrent. It was too late now! She could never marry Harry; she belonged to Vivian now; she would do just as he told her and thought right—marry him or leave him—but she would never marry any other man.

This was not only an impulse, but a determination in her mind, though pity and honour struggled hard against it. She had solemnly pledged her word to Harry. Again and again she remembered how she had promised to be true to him, and a tide of affection for him seemed to well up in her heart, as she thought of his loyal love for her. she hated herself for the suffering she knew

the knowledge of the truth would bring him ; and, as she thought of him, it seemed to her that she could never be happy again ; that, even with Vivian, all life would be poisoned by the remembrance of her broken faith, and of the pain she had given one who loved her. Still, instinct told her that she could not be his wife now. Suddenly there flashed across her a vivid remembrance of Harry's face when he had told her he was jealous, and had threatened (in jest, though it might be) to kill any man she preferred to him ; and a great dread crossed her as she realised, with intense vividness, in what a terrible position the brothers stood to one another.

How fearful to Vivian must be the pain of doing a wrong to one he loved so much ! How hard he must have struggled before

love could have conquered honour and trust!—and it was perhaps natural that an even keener pity filled her mind for the man she loved than for the one she had forsaken.

So the night passed, till in the grey light of morning utter exhaustion brought sleep to her weary eyelids.

CHAPTER VIII

“ Had we never loved sae kindly,
Had we never loved sae blindly,
Never met or never parted,
We had ne’er been broken-hearted ! ”

BURNS.

It was late when Angela entered the breakfast-room. By the window stood Vivian reading the *Times*. He was deadly pale, and when he came forward to say “ Good morning,” his hand was like ice, and his eyes were dim with that pleading, tortured look, like those of some dumb creature in agony.

Mr Willoughby and Frank were looking

at some plans of new cottages to be built on the estate, and talking too eagerly to notice the mute tragedy that was going on before them. On Angela's plate lay a letter from Harry, and her heart gave a throb of pain as she recognised the bold, firm writing.

"Open your letter, Angel," said Mr Willoughby, looking up; "I want to know if Harry has looked at that horse for me."

"He doesn't say anything about it," said Angela presently, speaking with forced calmness.

"Tiresome fellow! I must write to him again," said her uncle. "Well, Vivian, are you ready to come to the upland farm with me?"

"Certainly," said Vivian, putting down the paper.

"Pour yourself out some more tea if you

want it, Angel," said Frank, moving. "I must go to my housekeeping."

She went out of the door jingling her keys, and Mr Willoughby and Vivian followed. The latter lingered for a moment, and said rapidly, "I have to go to the farm. I shall be back as quickly as possible. Meet me at eleven o'clock at the Belvedere on the top of the hill, it is on my way back, and we shall be sure of no interruption there."

"Eleven o'clock," repeated Angela. "In an hour. Very well, I will be there."

Accordingly, at the appointed time she ascended the steps of the Belvedere. It was on the summit of a high hill at the further end of the park, a lantern-shaped tower containing one room, furnished with a table, a sofa, and some arm-chairs. Windows on

every side commanded fine views of the neighbouring country. Angela was standing by one of these windows looking at the undulating park below, the river winding away under the tall trees, in the distance, the gables and chimneys of Crofton Hall, with blue hills beyond. Presently she saw Vivian coming up the steep, narrow path. Her heart beat violently, and she moved away from the window and stood opposite the door. In a minute he came in and was close to her. They stood face to face; he took both her hands, but he did not draw her to him. Once he tried to speak but his voice failed him, then he bit his dry lips and attempted it again.

"Angel," he said, in very low tones, "what has your own heart told you? We must part."

"Part!" said Angela, hoarsely; her face grew white even to the lips; he thought she was going to faint. He put his arm round her and supported her to the sofa, then knelt down beside her, laying his cheek on her hand.

"Child," he said, "hate me, curse me, as I curse myself!"

"Curse you," said Angela, in almost a bewildered tone, "I love you. Wasn't it true, then? Don't you love me?"

"I love you with all the passion of my soul," he answered; "but I wish I had died before I told you so. I am a dishonoured traitor." He got up and walked away from her to the window. Angela tried to rally all her strength.

"Don't blame yourself," she said. "It is *I* that am dishonoured, it is *I*

that was bound. You have done no wrong."

"You sweet child," he said, coming near her again. "No! mine is all the blame. A man should be the stronger; he should be master of himself and of the woman he loves. It was my weakness when I lingered near you, and my treachery when I spoke as I did yesterday. I deserve to be hung like a dog. If it were any other man on earth to whom you owed your faith it might be different, but it is my *brother*, my brother who loves and trusts me, and *I* have done him this wrong; but I would die ten thousand deaths of torture sooner than continue in it!"

Angela did not seem to be able to answer him. A kind of longing for some physical pain came over her that might arouse her

from this dreadful numb sensation. She looked mechanically at a bright-eyed robin that was on the window-sill puffing out all his feathers. Vivian laid his hand on hers.

"Darling," he said, "*don't* look like that ; try and hate me. Good God ! am I not punished," he cried out, "that by my sin I have scorched you, my white flower ? But it is not for ever. You will recover ; in time you will forget."

"Never !" said Angela, passionately, "never ! Do you think I love and unlove like that ? Do you think I too have not felt remorse and misery ? But love has been stronger ; it is too late now. You may leave me if you like, but I shall never marry any one else ; it would be wrong and wicked now !"

"Yes, you will, my darling," he said very tenderly but steadily. "I know you suffer now,—God knows I shall never forgive myself for it,—but in time the suffering will lessen and die away. I know you can't believe it now," he continued, "let me put it in another way. Child, you don't wish to live for yourself alone? Can you not bear suffering for the sake of right?"

He had struck a chord now to which her nature gave some response. "I think so," she said, "if I could see where right was."

"It seems plain enough to me," he said. "You loved Harry once, didn't you?"

"I loved him once, I love him now," she answered, "but not like—*this*."

"Yes," he went on unheeding, "you love ~

him, you will love him more and more, and he is worthy of your love ; he is far nobler and stronger than I am, and, Angel, he loves you truly and devotedly, I know it, with all the strength of a tender, unselfish nature."

"Don't I know?" she answered. "Isn't it terrible to me? His letter to-day wrings my heart; but how can I marry him now when I have no love to give him?"

"You must, my darling. If you leave him you will break his heart and ruin his life, he is just the man to become reckless under such a grief; if you hold to your word you will find your reward at last."

"I want no reward," said the poor child passionately. "I can suffer as well as any one else, but it *cannot* be right to marry one man while I love another."

"It is right to keep your solemn word," he answered.

Angela buried her face in her hands. To break her promise did seem to her a terrible thing; to hurt Harry a terrible thing. Self-sacrifice, right — these words, struck deep chords in her nature, but still louder spoke the true woman's instinct, that it could not be right to marry for any reason but love.

Vivian's pale face was working with emotion. "Do I seem very stern, my darling?" he said. "God knows how I hate myself for this pain you are enduring, how gladly I would bear every pang for you! But you *must* bear it, Angel. There is no escape. Remember that song you sang me the other night, 'Gold shall be tried in the fire.' Meaner metals may remain in their earthy

tomb, but your heart is the pure gold. Can you not bear the fire ? ”

“ Yes, I can bear it,” she said, looking up, “ if you think it right. I will do as you tell me. Good-bye.”

She stood up, and held out her hand, but she trembled so that she nearly fell, and her face was deadly pale.

Vivian caught her in his arms. “ Angel, do you love me then so much ? ” he whispered.

“ I love you more than my soul,” she burst out wildly, clinging to him ; then she tried to free herself. “ Let me go, Vivian ; this will pass. We will do right.” But he strained her to him.

“ No, my child,” he said very low ; “ you shall not go, you cannot go ; the struggle is more than we can bear,—it tears body and

soul asunder. I could stand it well enough, I am strong enough for pain; but not you, my tender little bird, I cannot see you suffer like this. You are mine now,—my own wife. Nature is stronger than honour or faithfulness. We will go away alone together, to the ends of the earth—what shall we care for all the rest of the world, if we belong to each other?"

For a minute Angela rested in his arms while he spoke a hundred words of tender, caressing love, then she freed herself, and looking in his face said, "Vivian!"

"My darling!" he answered.

"Should you be happy if I became your wife?"

"Happy!" he repeated, "would it not be delirious joy to have you for my own?"

"No, but would it make you really and

truly *happy*? Answer me the truth now before God."

His face changed, a gloomy look came over it.

"Speak," she said, looking into his eyes as if to read his very soul. "Should you be happy?"

"I should be dishonoured," was the answer.

"Then that is enough for me," she replied. "I could sacrifice another to you, but I could not sacrifice you to myself; yes, we must part."

He stood for a minute looking at her, then he suddenly threw himself on his knees before her, and burst into a passion of sobs and tears—a strong man's tears, terrible to look at.

Like a true woman, Angela forgot her own

misery in that of the man she loved, and with tender word and caress strove to comfort him, till at last the dreadful paroxysm was conquered.

"My God!" he said, "how I love you! My darling, how hard, how bitter, it is to leave you! Angel, promise me,—will you promise me—that you will try to forget me?"

"I never can," she said in a low, dreary tone.

"Yes, in time; you will be happy in time, my darling. I *couldn't* leave you if I were not sure of that. Listen, child," he continued, "I will never forget you; no other woman shall ever be my wife; but you must try not to think of me."

"How can I help it?" she asked, with a cry of pain.

"Not at first," he said; "but you have a genuine love of knowledge that will help you. Read, study, never be unoccupied for a moment; that will fill your mind. Then, in time, you will have other hopes, other interests. You will find that, when you are a wife, your husband will be more than any one in the world to you; it must be so; your interests will be the same; Nature will do her part; and then you will have children; they will fill your heart. Believe me, my darling, I am speaking the truth when I tell you this pain won't last for ever."

"I don't know," she replied. "I can bear it,—I will bear it,—but it seems very terrible. Shall I never see you again? Where will you go? What will you do?"

"I am going out to India again," he

answered. "It is better,—indeed it is!" as she looked at him with utter misery in her face. "We must not see each other again for long years. Some day I will come back when you are married, and all this seems like a dream to you. And now, my darling, we mustn't stay here any longer."

Angela rose, white despair in her face; his was the colour of ashes, lined as if with age. He held out his arms to her. With tears, and kisses, and sobs, they spoke a "madness of farewells;" and then, hand in hand, went down the steps and home through the park, Angela without a word, he speaking occasionally some little low word of love. It was like walking in a dream, but at last they came within sight of the windows.

"Better part here," he said.

Then he clasped her hands for a minute with a clinging clasp ; they looked into one another's eyes with a long, long look. "God bless you," said each broken voice—and all was over.

CHAPTER IX.

(A PSYCHOLOGICAL VIVISECTION, WHICH WE RECOMMEND
OUR READERS TO SKIP, AS IT IN NO WAY ADVANCES
THE COURSE OF THE STORY.)

THE next morning came, a bright, fresh, delicious morning; the sun shone, everything looked the same, the children's voices were not one whit less merry, the dogs barked and jumped about as gaily, the usual flow of conversation was carried on, all the business and pleasure of life was the same, nature was immovable, man unheeding, and Angela had a breaking heart to bear and to hide.

The day before she had seen from her window the dog cart with Vivian in it drive away, and the strain had been too hard on exhausted nature. Angela was perfectly healthy and physically strong, but she was worn out by the excitement and mental pain of the previous week, and when she caught Vivian's last look as his eyes sought her window, a sudden sharp pain went through her, then it seemed as though a cold hand were laid on her heart, and that all the blood ebbed from it, and she fainted quite away.

She recovered consciousness slowly, to find herself on the floor of her room deadly cold, and with a sensation of some terrible misery hanging over her, but what she did not entirely recollect. Slowly it came back to her mind, "he is gone," and

then she turned her face to the floor, and wished the swoon had been death, kind death. Just then came a tap at the door and Frank entered—"Angel! what is the matter?"

"I am not very well, I am very faint and sick," replied Angela, and Frank, without further questioning, and with tender kindness, helped her cousin to the bed, covered her warmly, gave her essences and sal-volatile, and lastly, left her to solitude, and kept her from curious eyes and tongues.

Did Frank guess what had happened? She was, as a rule, very unobservant, and was always busy out of doors and in, so that she had not much time for watching other people; but a fellow feeling makes us wondrous wise; she had drawn her own conclusions as to the sudden change

during the past week in the manner of Vivian and Angela. Of course she had no idea of the last scenes in the drama, indeed her suspicions were quite vague about the rest, but she saw Angela was unhappy, and her instincts connected it with Vivian's latter avoidance of her and sudden departure. Frank felt indignant on Harry's account, yet sorry for Vivian and Angela, and perhaps, deep down below all other thoughts, lay, unconsciously to herself, a dim indistinct *hope*.

One of the strongest characteristics in her nature was an intense and tender sympathy for all forms of *physical* suffering. Angela's deathly pallor, icy hands, and evident bodily suffering, were quite enough to ensure for her consideration and kind care from her cousin, and poor Angela, feeling the

tender touches of the hands that ministered to her, could have thrown herself on Frank's bosom, and sobbed out all her bitter grief, but for the instinct that her trouble would meet with little sympathy, and that it must be borne in silence.

Then had come the night, and in the darkness Vivian's face close to hers, his voice in her ears, his caresses thrilling her. Every word and look of love seemed burnt in on her consciousness, and she was living in them again, and then came a sudden yearning craving for them, and a storm of passionate sobs. "I love him. I love him! O darling, come back to me." All thought was swallowed up by fierce suffering; and then, gradually, the sobs died away from sheer exhaustion, and kind sleep brought relief.

Who that has suffered does not know how terrible is the waking to sorrow? Slowly, from the dim land of dreams, our senses float back to us, and we are aware of some heavy load at our heart that we must rise up and bear. We keep our eyes closed, and struggle to hold fast that blessed unconsciousness of sleep, but in vain! It has gone, and the knowledge of the truth has flashed on us.

Angela rose, feeling a strange heavy pain, as though her heart were turned to a stone with an ache in it. She was very cold, and the tears welled into her eyes, and dropped slowly down her pale cheeks. She found herself mechanically wondering if all her life would be like this, whether she would ever forget and be,—not happy, no,—but

less miserable. "I am only nineteen," she thought, "and I may live so dreadfully long. If only I could die!" But death seldom comes when we call to him.

Mr Willoughby was out when she went down, so her white cheeks passed unremarked, and, after a show of breakfast, she escaped into the park alone.

She went to the chapel, and kneeling down, prayed for strength to bear her grief, and, as she prayed, a strange feeling of exaltation came over her. She felt capable of suffering, ready, nay willing, to bear it! Had she not often prayed that she might live the Higher Life, dreaded an existence of mere ease and self-indulgence, and now here was the renunciation she was called on to submit to? After all, it was not even a matter

of choice! He had gone from her. The look and tone with which he had told her that happiness with her could only be purchased at the price of honour, had left her no loophole of escape; she had not to choose between joy and sorrow, simply to bear inevitable suffering; and she could and would bear it without feeble complaint, and moan, and self-pity. She would not lie down with her face to the earth, she would rise and carry her cross. She would think of others, as he had bidden her, live for their happiness, and renounce the desire for her own;—after all she was not the first to suffer! All the noble hearts of history had trodden that thorny path with naked, bleeding feet, and should she fear to follow in their footsteps? The Saints had won the fiery

Crown of Martyrdom, the Blessed Mother had a heart pierced with many sorrows, and from the Cross spoke a voice that said, "Behold and see, all ye that pass by, has there been any sorrow like unto my sorrow?"

Yes, she would drink of that bitter cup, and her soul should not faint within her. A strange feeling that was almost happiness, though it was closely interwoven with blood-red strands of pain, came over Angel's mind. There seemed to be a sweet delight flavoured with some wild bitter taste in the thought of meeting suffering face to face, and of trying her strength against it.

"I can do without happiness," she thought, "if God wills. Life can still be beautiful and noble, without joy."

For three or four days this enthusiasm raised and supported her. By day she read, studied, made clothes for Mrs Evans' child, and thought little; by night, she did not sleep much, but lay with her hands folded on her breast, even smiling to herself, and with strange thoughts forming themselves in her mind and unconsciously taking shape in poetical rhythm. She saw her life and her pain in numberless allegorical forms; now a ship driving over a stormy sea, but steering straight for a far-off port. Now she was in a hot and weary desert, fainting and thirsty, and fruit beautiful and luscious hung before her, but guarded by cruel thorns. Though wounded terribly by the thorns, she plucked off that fruit, and the name of it was Purity, Tenderness,

Strength, and Love, and from it she pressed
the wine of life,

“The chalice of the grapes of God.”

In the morning, these strange thoughts and the measure in which they had suggested themselves would still be present to her mind, and she would write them down without erasure or correction as if they had been dictated to her. Musical harmonies, too, floated in her mind, and, as she had been well grounded in the rudiments of the science of music, she would often after a sleepless night write down without approaching the piano, a page of pure and strange modulations that seemed to have been breathed to her by some spirit.

Thus passed several days, but then came a terrible reaction. The poor child had thought herself strong, and, behold, the

waves of passion had risen, and where was her strength before them?

Such a dreadful, craving hunger came over her for *one* touch of his hand, *one* glance of his eye, *one* tone of his voice.

A storm of unutterable longing, of wild despair, shook her very soul. He was suffering too away from her, the misery in his eyes haunted her, and if only they could be together, O God, what a life of joy it would be! To be near him, to wait on him, to give him comfort when he was sad, rest when he was weary, encouragement when he was disheartened; to study and work with him and for him; to read with him, to think with him, to laugh and enjoy with him; to talk with him, or just to sit in blessed rest, in the summer twilight or the winter fire-glow, her hand clasped

in his, his cheek touching hers, while soul spoke to soul in the silence. That would be life indeed!

Picture after picture rose to her mind, as to some wretch perishing by the pangs of starvation come dreams of delicious banquets and royal feasts. Is not hunger the deepest need of our humanity? Then, too, on poor Angela's passionate nature pressed hard the necessity for daily and hourly concealment and self-restraint. If there were only some *one* on whose breast she could sob out all her misery, before whom she could drop the mask for one moment. Sometimes she felt as though she should go mad with this need for constant acting. It was such torture to take part in the ripple of everyday talk, to discuss village gossip and local news with a bursting heart, and

force back the rising tears, keep tune in the quivering voice, answer smile with smile. A long evening spent like this would make her feel as though she must have screamed aloud, but then would come the merciful solitude of night, and strength and soothing with it.

CHAPTER X.

“ When all desire at last, and all regret,
Go hand in hand to death, and all is vain,
What shall assuage the unforgotten pain,
And teach the unforgetful to forget ?”

DANTE—*Gabriel Rossetti.*

WHEN the first storm of the reaction was over, Angela collected all her force and struggled on again. She *had* to bear her trouble—what was the use of complaint and despair? She would not let herself think; she tried hard to act as Vivian had told her, to occupy her thoughts with study, and her days with action. It was very hard to do so; sometimes it seemed as though she *could* not

oblige her mind to work, and that even her body was too languid and unwilling to obey her. On the whole, though, she succeeded wonderfully; she made Cecil teach her algebra, and she worked away at the course of historical reading Vivian had marked out for her. Sometimes the book had to be laid aside while a flood of tears would shake her, as she thought of how different it was to read when *he* was there to guide and help her; but she was determined not to give way, and the book would be steadily taken up again, or she would resolutely turn her attention in another direction.

She spent her morning now always in the "priest's room." It was too great a strain to be with Frank in their joint morning-room; besides, that apartment was not very suited to study; the children and boys

were constantly in and out, and every five minutes there would be a new interruption.

Regie would come in, "Oh, I say, Frank : do just mend this for me ;" or Ethel with a message, "Here is a note from Lady Lorraine, Frank, and mamma says will you please answer it." Or a servant with "If you please, ma'am, there's a poor woman wants to see you ;" or Nurse with "Miss Frank, dear, can you give me some lint for Mrs Simpson's bad leg ?" or a message from the cook, that the butcher had no veal to-day, and what would she be pleased to order instead.

These were Frank's daily occupations, and good anodynes with which she soothed painful longing ; but she did not require nor wish for help in them, and they did not suit the

turn of Angela's mind. In the afternoon the two girls would go out for a walk or a ride together, speaking but little, or if they went to the school or the village they had subjects of interest in common.

John Evans had come out of gaol, and Angela and Frank were, according to a request in a letter from Vivian to Mrs Willoughby, busy in making arrangements for the family to go to Australia, and in fitting out Mrs Evans and the children with clothes for the voyage. This was a common sympathy, and it was a business which was good for Angela in many ways. The children were good for her too. Sometimes their chatter and laughter oppressed and bewildered her, but sometimes it came to her with a sense of joy that there was happiness in the world though she was wretched, and

it was good for that, when she came in weary from walking, and resolution was weak, she could not fall into dreams of the "might have been"—those saddest dreams of all—for the boys would clamorously demand a story, or Ethel and Nelly entreat her to cut out dolls' clothes, or little Pet climb on her knee, and put soft arms round her neck.

So the days passed,—some good days, some bad ones,—still to be borne and bearable.

It was the nights, however, which had now become so terrible. The dread of those nights would hang over Angela's mind all day. She would lie down in her bed, tired out and exhausted, but perfectly unable to sleep; and then through the hours of darkness would alternate sickening despair, fierce,

passionate longing, cold, aching misery. She would toss about her little bed, or rise and pace the room, backwards and forwards, like some caged wild animal, or throw herself on the cold hard floor, and try to find in physical discomfort relief for her mental pain.

It was little wonder that her health began to give way under the strain, and, as she saw in the glass her pale cheeks, fevered lips, and unnaturally brilliant eyes, she often wondered whether Harry would not easily read for himself the story that they told.

The month of December had passed, and now the time had come when Captain Vane was expected at Crofton to spend his two months' leave. As the day of his arrival drew near Angela's heart sickened with dread.

It had been difficult enough to write to him, and her letters had become short and few in number. A sense of hypocrisy and double-dealing had at times overwhelmed her when she had striven to answer one of his lover-like effusions with words that should not chill and hurt him, and yet should be true and honest. She was acting a lie in allowing him to believe he had her *love*, but then how could she stab him by confessing to him the bitter truth? Vivian had told her that faithfulness and honour obliged her to keep her word, and her own tender heart, and the woman's turn toward self-sacrifice, equally forced the obligation on her, so, like many another woman in this world, she tried to crush down the instinct which told her that, to marry one man while loving another was to be false to herself, to the man she

loved, and to the man she married, and that she owed a plain confession of the truth to Harry.

Still this instinct spoke too loudly for Angela to be deaf to its voice, though she had been brought up in an artificial and narrow creed, though it was in her character to yield implicit trust and obedience to the man she loved, and though, besides, she had the young girl's ignorant, innocent idea of a *husband*, as a divinity who would, of necessity, gain her whole heart. It was strange that, in Angela, this divinely true voice of her woman's nature, broke up, like a pure spring, through the hard crust of creed and education,—while Vivian, a free-thinker, a philosopher, a man of the world, a poet, was blinded by the ordinary conventional idea

of honour, which crushes so many hearts beneath its Juggernaut car!

He was like many other men who speculate on anything and everything, save that which most nearly concerns the happiness of their lives,—the strange, wonderful passion of love. He had never considered what true love is,—the eternal marriage of souls,—and thus, though he felt that Angela satisfied every need of *his* nature, he had a notion that, to her, time would bring healing and forgetfulness, while the stern law of honour,—rising supreme in his mind over all later systems of philosophy,—dictated to him that he could not be the one to rob his own brother of his bride, and that for Harry's sake Angela must keep her word.

Strange honour which could make its votary press on the woman he loved the

duty of taking, with a divided heart, such a pledge as the marriage vow ; strange brotherly love which would place in the arms of a husband a wife whose love, whose life, whose soul, were given to another !

CHAPTER XI.

"The fountains mingle with the river,
And the rivers with the ocean,
The winds of Heaven mix for ever
With a sweet emotion ;
Nothing in the world is single ;
All things by a law divine
In one another's being mingle—
Why not I with thine?"

SHELLEY.

ONE day Frank was sitting in her own little morning-room pasting pictures into a calico scrap-book. There was a sound of wheels on the drive outside, the girl flushed rosy-red ; then the colour all died away even to her lips, and she put her hand to her side for a moment as if in pain.

There was a tremendous peal at the hall door bell, then a sound of steps and voices, then, in the passage, a quick, firm strong tread, to which her heart beat response, and then a knock at the door. Frank steadied her voice and said, "Come in." The door opened, and in came Harry Vane, bringing with him a breath of the cold winter air. He looked handsome, kind, strong, manly; in spite of everything Frank could not help a throb of joy in her heart at seeing him again, and at the sound of the deep pleasant voice.

"Well, child," was his greeting, and before she had guessed his intention, Harry had stooped his head, and the brown moustache swept her cheek in the old brotherly greeting. She had not time to escape the caress, but she again became crimson and

then deadly pale. The kiss, so calmly given, was torture and yet strange pleasure to her.

The change of colour was so sudden and marked that it could not escape Harry's notice. He too flushed suddenly, and the greeting given so simply, and which had been so common in days gone by, assumed a new aspect in his eyes. He felt confused and embarrassed, though with tolerable presence of mind he rushed into conversation, while meantime he waited for an opportunity to look at Frank unobserved. Yes,—somehow, there was a great change in her; this was not his little cousin, the wild, childish, hoydenish girl, who had been alternately teased and petted by him. This was a woman, with pride, tenderness, and sorrow, in her face, as well

as free, open innocence. Her eyes seemed larger and bluer and softer than he had ever seen them before, like a bit of the summer sky; her face was thinner and paler, but fresh, and sweet, and clean as a wild rose; her brown, curly hair was neatly twisted, instead of looking wildly dishevelled; her dark winter dress fitted closely to her slight, graceful, upright figure; the little linen collar and cuffs, the plain gold brooch, the absence of hanging ornament, all satisfied his taste. He wondered that it had never struck him before how pretty Frank was, and then she had such an atmosphere about her of fresh air, and cold water, and morning scrambles among the dewdrops.

“Have you had any luncheon, Harry?”
was Frank’s first remark.

"Thanks, yes; I had some at the Club, on my way through town. Where's Angel, Frank?"

"Gone out," replied Frank in an abrupt, mechanical sounding tone; "I don't know where, but I daresay you might find her."

Harry felt hurt and offended. "Well, I think she might have stayed in when she knew I was coming," he said, in a tone of annoyance.

Should he adopt Frank's suggestion, and go out to look for her? Well, if she had wanted to see him, she might have stayed at home; he was not always going to run after her. He had had a long railway journey; he was cold,—the fire was crackling and burning pleasantly; probably he should not meet Angela after all,—no,—for

the present, he would remain where he was.

"I don't suppose I should find her, if I did go to look for her," he said aloud. "No, I mean to stop here. What are you about, Frank?"

"Making a scrap-book for little Tommy Ferrers," answered Frank, bending lower over her pasting and cutting.

"And who may Tommy Ferrers be, when he's at home?"

"Oh, don't you know?—a poor little lame boy in the village. How shall I arrange this page, Harry?"

"Let me do it," was the answer; "it is just the sort of thing I like."

In another few minutes Harry was busily engaged in cutting out and pasting in, both he and Frank much interested in their occupation.

Time passed very pleasantly. Frank could not always be unhappy, and the remembrance of the present had faded away, the old days of the past had come back again ; so the two snipped, and arranged, and covered themselves with paste, and laughed, and chatted, and found fault with one another, and seemed to enjoy themselves, in spite of Frank's sore heart and Harry's pique and disappointment.

Meanwhile Angela had been taking a long and solitary walk. The day was not cold, but stormy and blustering ; piles of cloud were driven over the sky, and the struggle against the wind gave Angela a sense of combat and difficulty which was pleasant to her, for it prevented the necessity of thought. The dreaded day of Harry's arrival had come at last. Possibly he was at Crofton

now, and he would be disappointed and vexed not to find her at home. It was rather silly of her to have come out, for after all, sooner or later, the meeting had to be gone through. Still it was something to defer the evil moment, and have a few more hours of freedom.

The object of her walk was a certain plantation of tall fir-trees, at the summit of a hill in Thurston Park, a place belonging to Lord Fitz Osborne. It was about three miles from Crofton ; and, by the time Angela reached the fir wood, she was tired with struggling against the wind, and glad to sit down on the trunk of a fallen tree and rest.

The pine-wood crowned a high hill, one side of which sloped towards the park, and was covered with furze bushes. On the other, the ground broke sharp away, so that

the dark pines overhung a high, precipitous descent, at the bottom of which it seemed as though the waves of the sea should be breaking. Instead of the sea, however, was a wide expanse of gently undulating country, wood, field, and meadow-land, dotted over with picturesque cottages and farmhouses, in the distance a grey church-tower. Angela remembered the last time she had looked at this view, one hot summer afternoon, when the white clouds flitting over the summer sky had cast changing shadows on the fields of waving yellow corn, and the dark woods had slept in silent shadow; while the song of birds, the hum of insects, the distant voices of the reapers, filled the warm air with life. Now, fantastic piles of cloud, torn and fringed, wave like a Mœnad's hair across the sky; the dark fields have been turned up

by the plough, and lie russet-brown, tinged with a purple bloom; the woods are grey and leafless; the trees in the hedgerows toss their naked branches against the sky; strange glints of sunshine illumine the landscape. One of them touches the white horses in that plough down below there, and the smock frock of the man behind, who is so patiently guiding the furrow. There is no sound but the roar and moan of the wind. Only the pine-trees are the same,—the dark, solemn pines, changeless throughout the seasons.

The wind struck with a kind of sharp vibration through the branches, as Angela gazed dreamily between the dark red boles at the distant landscape. Under foot the ground was covered with a thick carpet of brown fir-needles, overhead

was the sombre shade, in the air a keen, resinous, aromatic fragrance. A little squirrel, with his bright, beady eyes, peeped at Angela, sitting there so quietly. She looked very still, she did not see him; he looked a little longer, then grew bolder, came out of his hiding-place, ran quickly up the trunk of a tree, and sat on a branch above her head, waving his bushy tail in triumph. The squirrel watched her till he felt quite tired, and still Angela did not move; she was away in some strange thought-world of which squirrels know nothing.

That vibration of the wind in the fir-branches had reminded her of a line of poetry—

“Wind, the mighty harper,
Swept his thunder harp of pines.”

What a fine idea! Angela imagined dark

Norwegian forests and the winter storm roaring through them, and her ear seemed to catch the sound of mighty melody moving amidst clash and discord. Shelley had given the sound of that music in his "Ode to the West Wind"—

"The tumult of thy mighty harmonies."

She listened to the hissing in the branches, and her ear disentangled hidden strains of melody, while another line of Shelley's reverted to her mind:—

"Make me thy Lyre even as the Forest is"—

A lyre to be swept by the great Spirit of Nature in harmony with the pæan of the universe. Angela remembered a conversation with Vivian about the unity of science and art, and the great and immutable laws which govern alike the rolling of the planets and

the falling of a dead leaf to the earth. She remembered how he had explained to her that sound and light were alike motion, and it struck her that all through the universe swells a grand chant of harmony ; the planets circling, as Pythagoras imagined of old, in the music of the spheres ; the atoms moving in rhythmic order ; while even our dull mortal ears can hear the cadence of the waves of the sea, the bird's song, the waterfall's roar, the wind's lament. Man should attune himself to harmony with this mighty music, and Angela felt with sickening passion that her life was naught but discord :—

“ Oh lift me as a wave, a leaf, a flower !
I fall upon the thorns of life—I bleed.”

This expressed the cry of her soul. Why was this discord ? Dimly she felt that the great love of her being was denied her, that

without her love, life would be, not only sad, but maimed, torn, imperfect. Did law and music govern the whole of the material universe, and was love an affair of chance, accident, propinquity? Attraction holds the planets in their orbits, chemical affinity determines the union of the atoms, all the world palpitates with love,—perhaps it is a law that the souls which have affinity should gravitate together and seek for mingled life.

It was dark by the time Angela reached home; she went straight to the drawing-room where all the world was assembled at five o'clock tea.

Her heart beat with violence, as she opened the door and heard the strong vibrations of Harry's voice. He jumped up and came forward to meet her. How thankful Angela

felt that, before so many people, no lover-like caress was possible !

“ Well ! ” he said, “ a nice young woman you are, to go out just when you expect me ! ”

In the summer Angela would have replied with some light coquettish speech. Now, she flushed slightly, and only said in a nervous manner, “ What train did you come by ? ”

A fine ear would have detected whole volumes in the tones of her voice. Harry was not quick to see or hear, but still he felt chilled by the answer. Fortunately, there was an interruption. Frank called on him to give Angela her cup of tea ; as she took it from him, he pressed her hand. Angela did not withdraw the hand, but there was little response in her touch.

Captain Vane looked suddenly into her face; she was standing with the lamp-light shining on it. "Good heavens!" he exclaimed, "how ill you look, child! What is the matter?, Has she been ill?"

"I am quite well," returned Angela.

"Ill? no," said Mrs Willoughby. "Certainly, now I come to think of it, she is paler and thinner than she used to be."

"Why, she has lost all her colour, and there are great black rings round her eyes. What is the matter?"

"Nothing at all, I am perfectly well, I assure you."

"Then why is there this change in you? You must see a doctor at once."

He was so full of genuine concern and anxiety, that Angela felt her heart leap

up to him in affectionate gratitude ; but it was not *love*, and there was a caged, bound feeling in being with him, which was even worse than all her anticipations. As soon as she could make the excuse with any show of plausibility, she said it was time to dress for dinner, and left the room.

As she was going into the drawing-room after finishing her toilette, Harry suddenly met her, and, holding out both his hands, drew her into Mrs Willoughby's morning room, shutting the door upon them. He placed his back to it, and said in almost a fierce tone, "Now, kiss me! I have been away from you for six months, and you receive me as if I were an everyday acquaintance."

He drew her into his embrace

and kissed her passionately; Angela, trembling all over, submitted;—what else could she do? but she felt a sudden absolute loathing of him and of herself. What degradation, what humiliation there was in this kiss, received by her with such absolute coldness and dislike,—she who knew what the kiss was when “soul meets soul.” How base, how treacherous she was! And then suddenly the wild Hungarian blood flamed up, and Angela felt, as some tigress caught in a net might feel, powerless, helpless, but full of rage and fury and hatred. With the strange double nature we all have, she shuddered at herself for this feeling, but yet it seemed to her that had she had a knife in her hand, she might have plunged it into his heart or her own.

"Mother of God! I must be a Fury, or mad!" she thought.

This storm of emotions swept over her in one brief second, and showed no outward sign. Harry did not guess at it ever so dimly. He held her by both hands, and said in a smothered tone, "Don't turn from me, child! I love you with all my heart! I am entirely true to you. My lips have touched no other woman's since I kissed you last! And you?—but I know you are true to me! I would die sooner than distrust you! Yes, you are as pure as a snow-drift,—and as cold!" he added bitterly.

Angela felt stabbed to the heart; she would have confessed the truth to him then and there, but fortunately, or unfortunately, the dinner-gong sounded, and,

needless to say, like all well-bred people they obeyed its summons. In civilised life the ruthless tyranny of meal-times rises superior to all tragedy and emotion!

"Don't you think Angel is looking very ill?" asked Harry of Mr Willoughby as they sat down to dinner.

"Yes; she has lost all her roses," replied her uncle, "but now you are come, I dare say they will come back again; eh! Miss Angel? What are your plans, Harry, my boy? I suppose you have done your duty at home, and can stay here for the remainder of your leave? It was a great shame that you did not come here for Christmas!"

"Well, you see they like to have me at St Michael's for Christmas," said Harry. "I can stop here now for the rest of my

leave, except that I must run over to Paris for a little to see Vivian. By the way, has any one heard anything of Vivian?"

"No," was the general answer, "he has not written since he left here, except one short note just after he went away about some people he wants to send to Australia."

"Well, I had a few lines from him the other day," said Harry, "but awfully unsatisfactory; he wouldn't come over to St Michael's for Christmas, to my mother's great disgust, and he doesn't tell me anything about his plans, only asks me to come over and stay for a little. Fitz Osborne told me he saw him in Paris the other day, and that he is looking very ill. I think I shall go over there next week."

Then the conversation diverged to foxes,

pheasants, and horses, regimental news, Club gossip, and the morning papers.

Meanwhile Angela was reproaching herself for her flash of passion, and schooling herself to act out her part. She was very fond of Harry. As he sat there with his handsome, high-bred face, talking in his deep voice, with the pure accent and intonation, the voice of a thorough gentleman, she felt a strong sensation of pride in him and affection for him. His conversation was not particularly clever, but it was sensible and pleasant; he could tell a story with point and wit, and he had a high-minded, chivalrous way of looking at life which impressed itself in his manner, and could be seen in every line of his proud, kindly face. He looked at her with such loyal love in his eyes, how could

she break his heart for him? So she went upstairs determined to be kind and gracious to him, and crushing down the yearning that had risen in her heart at the very name of Vivian.

CHAPTER XII.

“Her eyes looked on me from an emptied heart,
When most my heart was full of her ; and still
In every corner of myself I sought
To find what service failed her ; and no less
Than in the good time past there all was hers.”

D. G. ROSSETTI.

THE next day was Sunday, and, as Angela entered the breakfast-room, Harry said,

“Would you like me to drive you over to Credisham to church, Angel ? We should just have time to get there, if you make haste with your breakfast.”

Angela hesitated. The drive would necessitate a long solitude *à deux* with Harry, but,

on the other hand, if she were to stay at home, he would be sure to remain with her, and it was perhaps preferable to be with him in the open air and driving, which would give him something to do and to think about, than to spend the morning indoors. Besides, as she was going to marry him, she could not possibly avoid being *tête à tête* with him for the rest of her life, so she might as well learn to get accustomed to it! She accordingly accepted the offer, and, in a short time, was seated by Harry's side, bowling along the Credisham road.

"Do you come over here often to church?" he inquired.

"I have only been once since I came back from Germany."

Harry looked surprised. "I should have thought some of them might have taken you

over sometimes, when they know you like to go."

"I daresay they would have done so, if I had asked them," said Angela, "but," she continued, with an effort to be open and confidential with Harry, "do you know I think I have changed a good deal; I don't think quite as I used to do about religion, and, though I like the services of the Church, and to feel that I am praying with other people, I don't feel that it is *necessary* for me to go to Mass as I used to do."

Harry looked disappointed. "Then you won't care about the chapel at the Priory," he said; "I was going to have it all restored and everything for you." There was real vexation in his tone.

"How good of you to think of it!" said Angela, gratefully.

"For God's sake, don't talk like that!" said Harry, with sudden passion. "Good! how can I be good to *you*? you are one with me, you are going to be my wife, you speak to me as if I were just—anybody else."

Poor Harry! he had not the gift of expression, but he felt most keenly that there was some great distance between himself and Angela.

"Won't you really like to have the chapel rebuilt?" he went on. "I saw an architect about it yesterday, he is going to do it beautifully; but if you don't care about it I will write and tell him not to do anything more. It was only because I fancied it would please you that I thought of it."

"Of course it pleases me," said Angela. "What will you have me say, dear, if you won't let me thank you? it is very, *very*

good of you,—now, don't say a word,—and I like the idea, very much. What will it be like ? ”

She went on talking about the subject which lasted them most of the way to Credisham, and became almost excited—six months ago it would have been wildly enthusiastic — about the organ Harry proposed to have built. She was very grateful, how kind it was of Harry to think of doing this for her ! yet it seemed to tighten the bands round her, and he, meanwhile, was still feeling the same vague sense of chill and strangeness.

Angela's strongest feeling when he had left her had been religious enthusiasm ; this plan of rebuilding the chapel had struck him as a most brilliant project for pleasing her and making her happy, and now, when he

had with difficulty brought himself into her region of thought, and had struck out an idea which he expected to gratify the strongest feelings of her nature, behold! she seemed to have shifted her focus, and he was not in sympathy with her after all!

People were streaming into the little Roman Catholic church at Credisham when they arrived there. Harry put down Angela at the door, then took his trap and horses to the Blue Boar, and then strolled slowly back to the church again. On entering the door he saw Angela kneeling beside a pillar, and made his way to her. She was very pale, and great tears were rolling unheeded down her cheeks, as she knelt with clasped hands, her face upturned, her lips moving. Harry felt distressed and also

rather provoked. Why should she cry? why was she unhappy? It was unnatural that she should be troubled like this now; besides, he had an Englishman's dislike to any public display of emotion, as well as the shrinking of a reserved nature from the emotion itself. He looked round uneasily. The congregation was principally composed of people of the working class, mostly Irish, who were rapt in their own devotions, with that absence of shyness and false shame that seems to characterise the Roman Catholic religion. There were, however, some soldiers from the Credisham barracks, and in charge of them an officer, a man whom he knew well, and who was now gazing with a bold stare at Angela. Harry was disgusted. He scowled at his quondam friend, bit the ends of his heavy moustache, moved

his feet impatiently, and finally, touched Angela.

"What are you crying for?" he whispered.
"Are you ill? Would you like to come home?"

Angela started and felt jarred all through her nature. The music, the subdued light, the scent of the incense, the old, familiar words of devotion, had worked on her excitable, impressionable nature, and she was accustomed to the unreserve of the Catholic religion and of Continental nations.

In a church, and during prayer, surely one might drop the mask from one's face. If one worshipped why should one not show it in expression and gesture? why might one not have the blessed relief of tears here, where all were kneeling to one kind Father, and thinking of their own sorrows and weak-

nesses and sins, not about their neighbours.

Angela was no Moses of meekness. She moved away from Harry impatiently, but the sense of a spiritual Presence had gone, and so had the harmony of the music, leaving behind a sensation of fret and worry.

Presently she felt ashamed of herself ; how wicked she was to lose her temper for a trifle ! She glanced at Captain Vane, he was leaning back in his seat, pulling at the ends of his moustache, and did not look at all happy. Angela timidly put her little hand on his, it was taken and squeezed in his strong palm ; and thus the little quarrel was made up, though still remained a sense of discord.

When the service was over Angela whispered to Harry to come away at once, for

she did not want to meet Father Mohoy to-day. They were not quick enough, however. One of the little acolytes came up to them as they were leaving the church and said, "Father Mohoy's compliments, and would the lady be so kind as to stay and speak to him for a minute?"

"Very well," said Angela, looking rather annoyed.

"Harry, will you go on and get the trap, and come back here for me?"

Harry departed, and presently Father Mohoy, having divested himself of his gorgeous robes, appeared from the vestry door. "My daughter," he began after a slight greeting, "do you know that it is more than a month since you have been to Mass, and that you have not confessed since your return from abroad?"

You have not been ill, for I have made inquiries."

He waited for Angela to speak. One of the coarse, commonplace type of priests, good-humoured, well-intentioned, kind-hearted, a worthy little man, in his way, but no physician of souls. Had he been a man of power and sympathetic insight, perhaps Angela, with her aching, tempest-tossed heart, and craving for sympathy, might have unburdened her trouble to him; but she did not feel the slightest impulse towards confidence in Father Mohoy, and confession as a duty was assuming a different aspect in her eyes.

"It is a long way from Crofton here," she replied; then, feeling rather ashamed of the evasion, "I know, father," she continued, "I have not been to confession

for some time. I no longer feel it a binding duty. I confess my sins to God."

The priest looked pained. "My child," he said, "is heresy beginning to affect you? do you contemplate a possibility of apostatising from the Church?"

"No," Angela replied. "I am a Catholic, father, I shall always be Catholic, I love the offices of the Church, but I cannot confess."

Father Mohoy sighed. He was sincere and genuine in his belief, and had looked on Angela, the future wife of a man of property, as likely to be a shining light to the Church. He considered a moment, then his experience told him that he was not likely to do much good by driving the girl into open revolt; so he cleared his brow and said, "Well, my daughter, the

Church is always ready to hold out arms of mercy to her erring children. I trust to see you before long seeking the blessed balm of the sacrament of penance. But, my dear young lady, how ill you look!" he added, dropping the artificial, priestly tone, and speaking in his natural, kindly voice.

"Thank you, father, I am quite well," said Angela, gratefully. "I am a little paler, I believe, that is all."

The priest still looked at her, and shook his head somewhat sorrowfully. "Well, well," he said, "God bless you, my child! it's a friend you have in Father Mohoy whenever you need him. Think now about confession; you will find it comfort your heart. Good-bye, my daughter."

"Good-bye, father," said Angela, warmly

and respectfully. "You have always been very kind to me. I am not ungrateful—really"—she said, smiling, "though I will not come to confession now."

As she and Harry drove away over the rattling stones of the little town, he said, "A jolly little Irish priest that. What did he want to say to you?"

"To scold me for not coming to confession," answered Angela, laughing. "I hoped to have got away before he saw me, but he was too quick for me."

"Why don't you go?" asked Harry. "Not that I want you to, I'm sure, only it's so rum that you should have changed like this in such a short time!"

He was certainly glad that his future wife should not care about confession, but still he had a vague jealousy of the unknown

influence that had been at work on Angela's mind, and a woman ought to remain constant to the religion in which she was brought up, unless, indeed, she changed to please her husband!

"There goes Boxer!" exclaimed Harry. "Impudent brute, I should like to punch his head for staring like that at you!"

"A cat may look at a king," said Angela, laughing.

"Of course you like to be stared at, like all women," said Harry, in an irritated tone.

"Well, really, Harry," Angela answered, "nothing I say or do seems to be right in your eyes."

There was a minute's silence, then Harry said, with an attempt to choose a pleasant subject of conversation, "I can't make up

my mind what to do when we are married." Angela grew a shade paler, and gazed steadily in front of her. "Of course I shall have to leave the army."

"I don't see that," said Angela with an effort, a heavy sort of pain growing in her heart.

"Yes, of course I must, darling, I couldn't have you knocking about with the regiment. No, I am going to settle down at the Priory, and become a respectable member of society. Shall I go into Parliament?"

Angela sighed inwardly, her heart fainted within her when she heard her betrothed speak so confidently of their marriage. Aloud she replied in a collected, dry kind of tone, "I daresay it would be a good thing to do."

"Well, upon my word, you seem to take precious little interest in anything I do!" said Harry vehemently. Then he glanced anxiously at the girl's somewhat averted face. It had an impassive, hard expression. Harry drew a half sigh, he could not tell what it was that hurt and chilled him so in Angela's manner. "Why don't you speak?" he asked, after a minute.

"I don't know what you want me to say," replied Angela, in almost an icy tone. Then her conscience smote her when she saw the under-current of pain in Harry's face, and she roused her will and spoke in a different tone :

"It would be a great thing for you to go into Parliament, you might do so much good."

"Oh, I don't know about that," was the

reply. "There isn't much chance to do anything in Parliament, and it's an awful bore getting in and going to the House. I am not sure I won't be an M.F.H.," he continued, laughing, "and not an M.P., though, I suppose, one could be both."

"What is an M.F.H.?" inquired Angela.

"Do you mean to say, you extraordinary child, that you have been at Crofton all this time and don't know what an M.F.H. is? Master of Fox Hounds, to be sure."

"Oh," replied Angela, "what Mr Hamilton is. Dreadful waste of time, I should think; at least, Mr Hamilton never seems to think of anything but foxes."

"I don't see that it's waste of time at all," returned Harry. "Some one has got to be a master of hounds. You may just as well do that as anything else. Now what could

I do if I went into Parliament, for instance ?
I am not clever enough to be a great speaker,
like Burke or Pitt."

"Well, I don't know much about it," replied Angela, "but it seems to me that it would be a grand sort of thing to make laws to govern one's country ; and besides, you might do a great deal. For instance—oh ! think of the laws to stop children working in coal mines, and the factory laws, how much good they have done ! Now, what I should like to work for would be schemes of emigration for the labouring classes."

"Why," said Harry, "what has put that into your head ? You would raise the price of labour in the country."

"That is just exactly what I should like to do. Isn't it terrible to think of men living, or rather starving, on seven or eight shillings

a week, as they do about here, with large families, some of them, crammed into cottages that you wouldn't put your dogs into ?”

“ They are contented enough,” said Harry perversely. He could not have told why, but Angela's excitement and vehemence were distasteful to him.

“ Contented !” she repeated, “ so much the worse, so much the worse ! I would educate them till they knew their misery, and could take the proper means to relieve it ; for as, after all, wages are a question of supply and demand, they can't get higher ones till the market is less overstocked, so the only plan is emigration to countries where labour is highly paid, and I would give every facility to that emigration. It seems dreadful to live in such luxury as we do, and to think of one's

fellow-creatures in dark alleys, and noisome courts, and reeking cottages, without light or air, or food or warmth, or cleanliness or self-respect. Why should I eat pheasants and truffles, and drink champagne, and some people never taste meat from one year's end to another? Why shouldn't the *necessaries* of life be given more equally?"

"Little visionary!" said Harry. "I suppose you'd like to put all the money in the world in a heap, and count it all out equally! I didn't suspect you before of Communism."

Angela looked indignant. "I am not joking, Harry."

"No, so I perceive. Where on earth did you get all these notions?"

Angela flushed slightly. Most of what she had said about emigration had been sug-

gested by listening to Vivian's conversations with her uncle.

Harry looked at the fair, excited face, tears standing in the great, dark eyes. "What a curious girl you are!" he said. "Who would suspect you of having such ideas in that pretty little head of yours? Well, don't look distressed; I promise you the cottages at Haversham shall be well looked after; the people shall have pigs, and gardens, and everything of that kind, and you can teach the school-children algebra and Greek, if you like,—if you want so much to educate them, though I don't see the good of educating them to be above their station."

"Yes," said Angela, "Haversham is all very well, but I don't want just to scratch the surface here and there, and help people by *giving* them cottages, *giving* them pigs, *giving*

them gardens. I should like to put them in a position to help themselves. I should like to do something towards relieving the misery of the world, not only the people in our village."

"Better begin with the village," remarked Harry, sensibly enough; then he added, "You are very unpractical, you see, my pet; there must be differences of station and comfort, and I don't think you could ever alter the world! By George! here we are at the lodge-gate, and we have wasted our whole drive in talking about cottages and Communism!"

He felt secretly vexed and disturbed by Angela's "notions." Frank sitting up all night with a sick woman, or working at clothes for the poor, or walking through mud and rain to her school, moved him

with respect and sympathy; but ideas of changing society, and spending life in schemes for sapping class differences, filled him with a mixture of contempt, vexation, and discomfort. His kind heart felt strongly for any individual instance of misery that was brought before him, and he was willing and desirous to do all he thought his duty, that is, look after his own tenants, be a kind, just master in his family, and a brave soldier if his country required him,—but he had the Tory prejudices of his class and education, looked on all deep-rooted schemes of reform as half visionary, half dangerous, and was of opinion that every one should help the poor, except the poor themselves.

For the rest of that Sunday Angela contrived a skilful method of evasion by which

she was never left *tête à tête* with her *fiancé*; but, in the evening, poor Harry, driven to despair, came up to her, and said, with a mixture of entreaty and command,—“Come into the conservatory, I want to speak to you.”

He led the way to the further end, and then taking her hand, said, “Why do you behave to me like this, my darling? Are you angry with me? Have I done anything to displease you? For God’s sake, don’t avoid me, and treat me with this icy coldness! You make me utterly miserable!”

He tried to draw her into his arms, but Angela moved quickly back and stood facing him. Her hands were clasped above her head, the tall ferns and hanging creepers made a frame around her. The dim light

shone on their tropical luxuriance, and on her white dress and lovely face. Pride, defiance, pity, all seemed blended in her expression. He looked at her, and a flood of passion and of anger mixed, suddenly shook him. "You are as beautiful as a statue, and as cold," he said. "Have you *no* feeling? I have given you all my love and my life, and you care for it no more than that table! You could cast me off like an old shoe, I believe! Do you intend to throw me over? Is this the meaning of your treatment of me? By God! if you marry any other man but me, I'll kill him like a dog."

Angela's face turned deadly white, but she did not move or answer. Harry's passion suddenly faded.

"Child," he said, "forgive me, I am a

violent brute to speak to you like this. I don't mean it. Leave me, if it will make you happier. I care only for your happiness. But no," he went on in a hoarse, choked voice, "you *do* love me, don't you? It hasn't all been a lie? Love me, just a little, my darling, I will give my life to making you happy." Great tears stood in the strong man's eyes.

Angela's face and attitude suddenly relaxed; she burst into tears and let him clasp her, unresisting, to his breast, while she sobbed out—

"I didn't intend to make you so unhappy. I am not going to leave you. You are very good—very good!"

He kissed and caressed her, somewhat comforted, but still, at the bottom of his heart, a little shaken and doubtful; and

Angela submitted, pity for herself, pity for him, both piercing her heart. Yes, Vivian had been right, it would break Harry's heart were she to leave him; she must keep her promise; but there seemed no faintest gleam of brightness or hope in the future. She, who knew what were the delights of sympathetic intercourse, could not but feel how jarring would be the life *à deux* where every idea and taste was so dissimilar. Harry was not much more likely to be happy with her, than she with him. Even if she could only see the path of duty clear, feel absolutely sure that her sacrifice of self would be for the best, life would not be so hard. "O Vivian! O my love, my love!" cried out to the night the poor, passionate, loving little heart, "why *can't* I be your

own? I love you so—I love you so—I *can't* marry any but you!”

Have not the middle-aged the best of life after all? those of them, I mean, who have neither great joys nor great sorrows; who lead comfortable, prosaic, commonplace existences, mostly unaware of the storm and the tragedy that go on around them, and of the deadly battle in the thick of which their children are fighting.

Mr Willoughby dozed off to sleep that night amidst thoughts of magistrate's meetings, of a new ring fence he intended to put up, and of which horse he should ride the next day. Mrs Willoughby's meditations were of a toilette she intended to order for the next ball, and her rest was peaceful and undisturbed; while, under the same roof, Frank and Angela were

tossing about on their respective pillows—
Captain Vane sitting over the fire smoking
innumerable cigars, each one of them in
silence and solitude, trying in vain to still
pain and longing of heart, and to woo rest
and forgetfulness.

CHAPTER XIII.

“A labourer in Christian England,
Where they cant of a Saviour's name,
And yet waste men's lives like the vermin's,
For a few more head of game.”

KINGSLEY.

By the next morning Harry had forgotten most of his vague unhappiness, though there still remained a sort of slight, dull ache at the bottom of his heart. To some men, however, hunting is a passion to which even love is subordinate, and this was a splendid hunting morning. There was a meet conveniently near, and he was going to ride a new horse which he was sure would carry him well.

Everything seemed to go smoothly that morning. His shaving water was hot, his razor sharp, his new "pink" coat fitted to perfection, his tops had been well cleaned, neither too light nor too dark, but just the colour of a ripe Gloucester cheese; his breeches were snowy white; he was well satisfied with his own appearance, and, indeed, he had reason to be so, as he stood for a minute before the large looking-glass before he went down to breakfast.

He looked a splendidly handsome man as he entered the breakfast room. A tall, strong, massive figure, long of limb, deep of chest, magnificent in proportion and in development of muscle. Set erectly on a column-like throat, a small, clean-shaped head, with ringed curls of dark hair; deep

blue eyes, with long, dark lashes ; chiselled, high-bred features ; a heavy, dark moustache, and an air of aristocratic distinction. Such was Angela Willoughby's lover, and most girls would have thought her only too happy in the possession of him !

Harry enjoyed his day's hunting very much ; his horse carried him straight as an arrow ; there were no *contretemps* ; he came home hungry, happy, excited, ready to enjoy a good dinner, good wine, a cigar, and a little love-making.

It was very pleasant at dinner time to discuss the day's run, while every now and then he pressed Angela's hand furtively. Mr Willoughby's *Chateau-Margaux* had never seemed silkier, nor the flavour of the post prandial Havannah more soothing, and Captain Vane came up to the

drawing-room in a state of perfect beatitude.

Angela was sitting at the grand piano at the further end of the long room, playing some of Chopin's strange, weird music. Her fingers had wandered into the funeral march, and she played it, first majestically and sonorously, then gradually softer and softer, till it died into a sighing wail.

Harry came up and threw himself into a chair beside her. "For Heaven's sake, don't play those dismal things, my pet, you give me Rats!"

"What would you like," said the girl, looking at him with defiance in her eyes, "the '*Belle Hélène*' waltzes?" She dashed her fingers on the keys, and rattled off a few bars, then stopped and looked up at him.

"Go on," he said, "it's very pretty—no,

stop a minute, I want to tell you something. You will have a fine opportunity for your emigration schemes. I am going to buy Lord Fitz Osborne's Scotch property, and turn it into a deer forest and grouse moor."

"Do you mean to say, send the people away who are living there?" asked Angela.

"Well, there are not many people, about fifteen or twenty families. I will make arrangements, if they like, to send them to Australia or Canada."

"But do they want to go?"

"I can't say about that; they won't be asked; they will be much better off in a colony."

"I think it's a horrible thing to do," said Angela, "to turn people from their houses

and homes, and the country they know and love, for the sake of *game*." Her eyes flashed with indignation.

"Well," said Harry, in a deprecatory manner, "one must have some open moorland for shooting."

"The lives of the poor sacrificed to the pleasure of the rich, that is what it always seems to me," said Angela. "I can't bear the very name of game, I am always hearing of misery caused by it. That young Whitaker, in the village, has been going to the bad ever since he came out of prison, where he was sent for poaching, and it is the same in a dozen cases."

"You seem to think poaching no crime," replied Harry, rather angrily. "It is stealing, just as much as any other kind of stealing; you wouldn't pity a man who was

sent to prison because he stole out of a shop window."

"Well," said Angela, "no doubt you have a great deal of right on your side, but it always seems to me that game preserving is some dreadful Moloch, to which the blood of the innocents is sacrificed."

As she spoke, Harry grew more and more indignant. The "Norman mania" was strong in him, and the immaculateness of the game laws was among his most cherished prejudices.

"I can't think where you got such extraordinary ideas into your head," he said, in an angry tone. "What would England be without her sport? and how can you have sport without game laws? But there is no use talking to you," he finished impatiently. "You *can't* know anything about the subject,

and I believe you only take up these ideas to annoy me ! ”

“ Indeed, I don’t,” was the reply. “ I can’t help having these ‘ *ideas*,’ as you call them. I suppose I have a right to have my own opinions.”

“ A woman oughtn’t to have decided opinions,” returned Harry ; “ or, at all events, they should be the same opinions as her husband’s,” he added, half laughing.

“ I haven’t got a husband,” returned Angela. “ I suppose you think a woman should keep all her opinions in a state of solution, until she learns what her husband’s are, so that she may run them into his moulds ! ”

“ I am getting all sorts of new lights about you,” was the answer, in a sarcastic

tone; "it now appears that you go in for 'Woman's Rights.'"

"The right of free thought, at all events," was Angela's retort; then she looked up at him with a defiance, half laughing, half real, and said, "*Liberté, fraternité, égalité*," and began crashing out the chords of the *Marseillaise*.

Harry walked away from her with very real vexation in his mind. It was most provoking that she should adopt these notions; she seemed to do it on purpose to vex him. What on earth could a girl of her age know about the subject? and why shouldn't she think as he thought about such things, instead of always taking the opposite side? She didn't seem to mind in the least what he thought! He began to have a dim idea that it would be

unpleasant to have a wife who had apparently so little respect for his opinion, and seemed to hold views the enunciation of which irritated him as a red flag does a bull.

As to Angela, when she went to bed that night, she reproached herself for having been ill-tempered and disagreeable. Why, oh, why was it, that she either could not find anything to say to Harry, or else quarrelled with him? she who had always been supposed to have such a sweet temper, and had never known before what was the meaning of the verb, to quarrel! About the Scotch Moor she determined to speak with more tact and gentleness; but her heart sank, sank, sank, with a heavy load, for, every hour, life seemed to become more painful and difficult.

Every day, as it went by, found the

fiancés further apart. They did not see much of each other, for Harry hunted nearly every day, and went out shooting at other times; and, when he was in the house, Angela devoted much attention to eluding the chance of being alone with him.

Her coldness was gradually chilling her lover also. Sometimes a half-formed idea rose in his mind that if Angela were not so very beautiful, he would not care for her much after all; she responded so little to his affection, and she so often annoyed him by dreaminess, excitability, opinions he considered wrong-headed, and, above all, by the attitude of criticism in which she seemed to stand towards him.

Meanwhile, the days were to Angela days of torture, and of a torture which

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had not a good effect on her character and nature. She shuddered sometimes at the capacities for evil which seemed to be latent in her. She caught glimpses of volcanoes of furious passion, of which she could imagine herself capable ; she felt herself at times hard, sarcastic, ungentle, capricious ; she could even imagine herself feeling a delight in inflicting on others some of the pain she suffered herself, though, to do poor Angela justice, she did not hurt deliberately and purposely, even in her bitterest moments. All pleasure seemed to be gone from study. What was the use of it ? what would be the end of it ? only to widen the gulf between herself and the man who was to be her husband, with whom she would have to spend the whole of her life ; besides, study made

her *think*, and she wanted to stifle thought.

Her adoring, craving love for Vivian was now not only pain, but shame and agony to her, for she could not think of him but with a feeling of disloyalty and double-dealing; now, when she was daily receiving from another caresses and words of affection, when she continually heard her marriage with that other talked of as a certain event daily drawing nearer. And Harry's words of love and lover's kisses gave her also a miserable feeling of disloyalty and faithlessness to Vivian, him whom she really loved with every fibre of her nature. The sense of doubleness weighed on her like a nightmare. She was true neither to the man she loved, nor to the one to

whom she was pledged; there was no comfort anywhere.

Religion had lost its peace and light; thought brought deeper misery; the enthusiasm which had supported her at first had, for the time, entirely faded; she could imagine no relief but in momentary forgetfulness, and had a craving for some anodyne or counter-irritant to deaden this cruel, bitter suffering. Sometimes she wished for excitement to take her forcibly out of herself; how much more tolerable must life be, she thought, to men, who can seek danger and violent exercise, or to women who live, as her mother had done in girlhood, amidst the glare and confusion of theatrical life! Sometimes she thought that if she could have a severe illness, that physical pain and weariness might withdraw her thoughts from the

mental torture that was so much harder to bear.

The poor child's courage would not have failed her so entirely had not her bodily health given way during this life-and-death struggle. It was wonderful that her constitution should have so well borne up under the strain of constant sleeplessness and unhappiness ; but now exhausted nature was every day losing ground ; she suffered from headache, general lassitude, and weakness, and, though she still persisted that there was "nothing the matter," really felt as ill as she looked.

Her rounded contours were sharpening ; her exquisite colour had entirely disappeared, leaving in its stead a scarcely less lovely alabaster whiteness, now and then relieved by a feverish flush ; her eyes looked large

and bright, as though some internal fire were consuming her.

Her uncle and Harry were both very anxious about her, and took her up to town one day to see a London physician. He gave the usual prescription—tonics, exercise, and absence of worry, whereat Angela smiled, half-piteously, half-sarcastically.

Meanwhile her manner to Harry was very variable—sometimes hard and sarcastic, sometimes gentle and affectionate, sometimes avoiding him, sometimes frantically struggling to bring herself into sympathy with him; while he, on his part, was by turns hurt and repelled by her coldness, annoyed and unhappy at the difference from his own of all her tastes and ideas, or driven to wild, passionate love by the fear of losing her altogether.

CHAPTER XIV.

"And with joy the stars perform their shining,
And the sea its long moon-silvered roll,
For alone they live, nor pine with noting
All the fever of some differing soul."

MATTHEW ARNOLD.

ONE evening Mr and Mrs Willoughby were dining out. Harry, Angela, and Frank would have been a somewhat silent trio, had not Regie and Cecil enlivened the dull dinner with endless fun and jokes. After dinner, however, they went off to prepare their lessons, and the two girls left Harry to his cigar, Frank, as usual whenever she could manage it, disappearing to her own room.

When Harry went up to the drawing-room, he found Angela alone, sitting on the hearthrug, reading by the glow of the fire. He sat down on a chair near her, and drew her close to him, till her head rested against his knee, while Angela, with an impulse of tenderness and affection, took one of his strong, brown hands, and laid her soft cheek against it.

Poor Harry's heart gave a throb of joy. "She does love me, after all," he thought. "What are you reading, my pet?" he asked aloud, longing to please her by showing some interest and sympathy.

"Shelley," was the reply; "'The Revolt of Islam;' may I read a little of it to you?" she added timidly.

"Certainly, I should like it very much," was Captain Vane's answer. "I like poetry

awfully sometimes, though I know you don't think so!"

Angela avoided replying to this assertion, and began to read the exquisite description of the last canto. As she read, her voice became deeper and more musical; her spirit was floating on the tide of melodious words. Harry was gently stroking her hair, and listening with apparent attention and pleasure. For once Angela felt happy in the sensation of shared and sympathetic thought. She read on, more delighted with every verse, till she came to the lines—

"Elysian islands, bright and fortunate,
Calm dwellings of the free and happy dead."

Harry's voice broke in, "Angela, why do you do your hair in this way? I think it would be more becoming to you a little higher."

Angela could not have felt a greater shock had he dashed a bucketful of cold water over her. She stopped dead short, and shut the book.

"Go on," said her lover. "I beg your pardon for interrupting you ; I just thought of it that moment, so I thought I would tell you ; go on, darling, I like it very much," but he yawned slightly as he spoke.

Angela was struggling hard for justice and sweetness. She did not speak for a moment ; then she said brightly and pleasantly, " No, I won't read any more to-night ; I think I am tired ; come into the conservatory, and look at the stars and the flowers, and then let us have a game of chess."

Harry looked much relieved, and they sauntered slowly round the conservatory, arm in arm, in a lover-like fashion, Angela

burying her face in the flowers, and inhaling long draughts of their perfume, and Harry gazing up at the stars, and remarking that "it was a clear night, and there was frost in the air, he was afraid there would be no hunting to-morrow."

Presently he looked round at Angela with a tender admiration, mixed with surprise, and a slight sadness in his eyes, and said, "What a curious, poetical, intellectual, little creature you are! you would suit Vivian much better than me."

It was too much for the girl's endurance. She moved quickly into the drawing-room again, and, making some excuse about going to look for Frank, hastily left the room.

She went upstairs to her own room, but found it tenanted by housemaids, replenish-

ing the fire and turning down the coverlet of the bed, so she passed on down the long gallery to the "priest's room," where she was sure of solitude. She threw herself down on the cushioned seat, in the embrasure of the deep window, and, resting her face on her hands, gazed through the small diamond-shaped panes of the mullioned casement at the clear starlit sky.

Sometimes night brings soothing and comfort to passionate aching hearts, lays a cool hand on fevered brows, speaks with a soft mother's voice of sympathy, rest, and peace. Sometimes, however, Nature seems to us cold, hard, and unheeding; her moods jar on our sorrows, and she has so little care for the breaking hearts of her children.

This night, as Angela gazed up into the

intense, clear vault of Heaven, it seemed to her the stars looked down pitiless, passionless. A terrible feeling came over her that there was no hope, or comfort, or love in Heaven or earth, nothing but a blind iron Destiny, remorselessly crushing our lives in the progress of its awful car. If there were any God He was as the gods of the Greeks—

“The Gods who haunt
The lucid interspace of world and world,
Where never creeps a cloud or moves a wind,
Nor ever falls the least white star of snow,
Nor ever lowest roll of thunder moans,
Nor sound of human sorrow mounts, to mar
Their sacred everlasting calm.”

She suddenly broke into despairing sobs and tears. She was weeping with a terrible, heart-broken abandonment, when the door opened, and Frank came in.

“Angel, child, what is the matter?” she

said; "do try to stop, you will be so ill! Wait a minute, I will be back directly." Frank rushed away, and presently returned with water and sal-volatile which she forced her cousin to swallow. Gradually Angela's sobs subsided, and the two girls sat together, clinging to each other in the cold, dark room, with the stars shining down on the two young faces and passionate throbbing hearts.

"Upon my word," said Frank at last, "I *hate* that man!"

"What man?" said Angela. "What do you mean?"

"Vivian, of course! do you think I'm as blind as a bat, child? Of course, I see how things are. He comes here and makes you care for him, just for his own amusement!"

"It is nothing of the kind!" said Angela, indignantly.

"Do you mean to tell me, then," said Frank, "that you *don't* care for him? Why, I'm not a fool! I can see as far through a mill-stone as any one else! Though, how you *can*, I can't imagine, when you are engaged, and *he* is worth twenty of Vivian."

"You always said you liked Vivian the best," said Angela, by way of parry to this attack.

"So I do, but Harry is worth twenty of him all the same! I call it heartless and selfish and dishonourable of him to come here, and make you like him, and then go away, quite delighted with the triumph to his vanity!"

"You have no business to judge, Frank,

when you know nothing about it ; he suffered as much, perhaps even more than I do, and he was far stronger and more unselfish than I was. If he had not left me, I should never have left him ! ”

“ He told you he loved you, then ? ” said Frank.

Angela did not answer.

“ I know him exactly,” said Frank ; “ he stayed on here till he was in love with you and made you care for him, and then he talked about ‘ Destiny,’ and goes off and thinks himself a martyr ! I hate him ! ”

“ I won’t listen to you saying such things,” said Angela, firing up ; “ he is very good, and brave, and strong. I love him with all my heart, and if he had said to me ‘ Come,’ I should have gone ; but he told me to stay and fulfil my promises, and I

have tried to obey him, but it is *too* hard, *too* difficult ; it *can* not be good or right !”

“Do you mean to say you would throw Harry over ?” cried Frank.

“I don’t know what to do—I want to do what is right, but every day it seems clearer to me that I ought to tell him the truth ?”

“It is all very well to say *ought*,” said Frank, “when it’s what you *want* to do ! I think it would be a most dishonourable thing ; and it would break Harry’s heart, you know it would ! I can’t think how you can dream of doing such a thing for a moment, when you know how miserable he would be !”

“That is what *he* said,” returned poor Angela, sadly.

“Who ? Vivian ? I daresay ! after making

all the unhappiness and trouble himself! How *could* he do such a thing as steal your heart from Harry, who has always loved him so much!"

"Frank," broke in Angela, "don't say another word against him, I won't stand it! You may blame me as much as you please; it was *I* who was pledged."

"I don't want to blame any one," said Frank. "What a miserable world it is! Angel, you *must* not break Harry's heart, you *must* be true to him, you *must* make him happy, he must not be hurt and forsaken. You can't help loving him best, really, after all!"

So judged the girl who loved him herself; unselfishly pleading for the happiness of the man who had possession of her whole heart.

Who could help loving him best? and *he* must not suffer.

As to Angela, Frank's judgment had now added its weight to the idea of duty Vivian had imposed on her, and to her own dread of hurting Harry. Yes, she must keep her promise.

CHAPTER XV.

. . . . "Our Lady, all smiling and smart,
With a pink satin gown all spangles,
And Seven Swords stuck in her heart."

R. BROWNING.

"How delightful it must be to be grown up, and go to balls, and do as you like; mustn't it, Ethel?" said Nelly enviously.

"Jolly," replied Ethel. "Come along, Nell; Jim and Maurice and I are going to stand on the stairs and pounce at the dishes when they come out of the dining-room. There's meringues and such scrumptious little cherry tarts."

"All right," replied Nelly; "come along,

Rosalinda, my dear," taking up a flaxen-haired doll, "you shall have some nice things too. Good gracious, Ethel, you *have* made such a mess of your frock!"

"Oh, never mind!" said Ethel, "who cares about frocks."

"I like to look nice," said Nelly reflectively. "It must be very delightful to be like Angel and Frank, grown up, and have lots of new dresses, and no lessons, and no bothers. Ethel, did you see Angel's new dress? Such a beauty. She said I might go to her room to-night, and see her dress for the ball; I think she will look very pretty."

Nelly's opinion was confirmed by the low murmur of admiration which greeted Angela's entrance into Lady Ida Hamilton's ball-room.

The party from Crofton was decidedly a striking one. Mr Willoughby, a fine-looking specimen of an Englishman, with Lady Treherne on his arm. The erect, delicate-featured old lady, with the bright blue eyes, superb in black velvet and diamonds, on her head a pyramidal edifice of snow-white hair and *Mechlin* lace. Then came pretty, graceful Mrs Willoughby with handsome Captain Vane; and the two girls followed, Frank, looking fresh and charming in a white dress that floated around her slender upright figure, and Angela in a Paris costume, which had been one of Lady Treherne's gifts. It was a dress of mixed green and white tulle, flounce over flounce, so that the floating cloudy material had the appearance of undulating water. Waxy-looking water-lilies looped

it up, and in her hair Angela wore more water-lilies and strings of pearl, with pearl ornaments on her neck and arms. She had an exquisite rose-coloured flush on her cheeks; her eyes were large and starry bright; and all round the room echoed a buzz of admiring comments.

"How lovely Angela Willoughby is looking to-night!"

"What an exquisite dress! a married woman's dress, though, not a girl's;" this, needless to say, from a woman.

"Who is that water-sprite?"

"Do introduce me to the Undine, Lady Ida!" and so on.

Harry's passion for his beautiful *fiancée* was fanned into fiercer flame by the admiration of which she was the object, and his vanity was pleasingly excited by the thought

that she was his own especial property, so that the applause was reflected on himself. He soon found, however, that he was not destined to derive much benefit from the effect of his proprietorship. In reply to a suggestion that she should dance all the fast dances with him, Angela laughed and replied, "Why, I am engaged already for most of them. I have kept Nos. 6 and 11 for you. We see so much of each other at home. I am sure you must be tired of *toujours perdrix*. Yes, Captain Hamilton, I am quite ready," and she floated off. She was in a defiant, reckless, excitement-craving mood, and she threw herself with *abandon* into the spirit of the ball, dancing, laughing, and, truth to tell, flirting in a manner which goaded poor Harry to despair.

"How many times do you mean to dance

with that infernal, conceited coxcomb?" he asked in an angry whisper, as he saw Angela giving another valse to a certain Mr Spencer Sidney, the most devoted of her attendants.

"Why, I am not dancing with him very often. O Harry! you are not going to act the jealous Blue Beard, are you? Thank you, Mr Sidney, I *should* like an ice," and again she was gone.

Mr Sidney was a tall, fair, good-looking man, with flaxen hair and beard. He was *attaché* to the British embassy at Vienna, and he talked pleasantly and cleverly, and valsed like an Austrian, that is, to perfection.

To Harry it seemed that Mr Sidney was always by Angela, either floating round the room with her in mazy circles, or sitting in the conservatory beside her, and "what on

earth could she find to like in such a d——d puppy?" he thought; "but she is a coquette to the core," he added bitterly; "she has no more heart than a cocoa-nut."

Meanwhile Angela, under all the upper current of excitement, even of pleasure, was as dully miserable as any human being who ever wore a mask. There was a side to her nature, inherited from her Magyar and *artiste* mother, which caused her to feel a wild delight in dance music, with its rhythmical cadence, in the dreamy movement of the waltz, in the lights and flowers of the ball-room, in looks and tones of admiration, but the other side of her character was not silenced nor satisfied. In her heart was an aching longing, and, as in the midst of some jesting repartee to Mr Sidney, she looked from her partner's handsome face round the

crowd of moving figures, a strange feeling came over her that this was some dream world in which she was acting a part, and a line of a simple Scotch song echoed in her mind—

“All men besides are to me like shadows.”

Frank looked at her cousin that night with an indignation, mixed with utter surprise. That any one could possess the great treasure of Harry's love, and treat it with such indifference, seemed beyond measure wonderful to her, and it was strange to see, so little prized, that for which *she* would have given all else on earth !

At the end of the evening there was a cotillon, and during one of the figures Angela caught a look of pain in Harry's eyes, and felt a sudden remorse and self disgust. Finding his remonstrances ineffectual, Cap-

tain Vane had been avoiding her all the evening, though she had often *felt*, rather than seen, him looking at her; now, as he came up amongst other gentlemen for the mirror figure, she determined to make amends, and signalised him as her choice.

They danced one turn round the room, and then Captain Vane quietly left the ball-room, leading Angela into the silent and deserted conservatory.

"Come back to the dance, Harry," said the girl, taking her hand from his arm. "I didn't choose you in order that you might bring me here and scold me!"

"I am not going to scold you, child," he returned, in a low voice of restrained emotion. "I love you with all my heart," he went on passionately, pressing her hands to his lips, "and you are driving me to madness.

Angel, tell me the truth. Do you intend to throw me over? *jilt* me, to put it plainly? say 'yes' or 'no;' just one word!"

"*No*," said Angèla, in a low voice, looking down and playing with her fan; her face was pale and her lip trembled.

"God bless you, my darling!" he returned. "Then do as you like; dance, talk, amuse yourself, if only you will love me and be true to me. You do love me, don't you?"

"I am very, very fond of you," returned the girl, "and I am not going to throw you over. Dear Harry, do look happy; come back to the ball-room and dance."

"Yes, in a minute," he answered. "You think me an unreasonable, jealous brute, Angel, but it is because you seem to be slipping away from me, and the fear of losing you drives me wild. If you were to

throw me over I should go to the devil in a precious short time ! ”

“ I am not going to throw you over, dear Harry,” said Angela, with an impulse of remorseful affection ; “ forgive me if I have been unkind. I am not worthy of so much love from you ! — If I could only make him happy,” she thought, “ there would still be some comfort in life ! ”

CHAPTER XVI.

"Oh, wert thou in the cauld blast,
On yonder lea,
My plaidie to the angry airt,
I'd shelter thee."—BURNS.

"SURELY, Frank, you are not going out in this weather," said Angela, in a tone of dismay.

It was the day after the ball; Angela was standing at the window, looking out at the snow-flakes which were thickly falling, when Frank came into the room in out-of-door costume, a basket in her hand.

"Yes, I am; I must go to see that sick

daughter of Joe Bates, and take her some wine and things."

"But, Frank dear, just see how it's snowing, and the snow is so thick on the ground, too, you will never be able to walk, and you will get wet through, and make your cold so bad!"

"My cold isn't anything."

"It will be if you don't take care of it."

"Oh, nonsense!" said Frank; "I'm not made of salt or of sugar! I want a walk. Besides, Ellen Bates wants wine and cod-liver oil."

"Send one of the grooms," suggested her cousin; "I am sure it would be a charity to give them something to do, now that the horses are all quiet in the stables."

"No, no," said Frank, "I am going myself; I like it, I tell you. Good-bye!"

and off she went, Angela calling after her—
“Well, at all events go by the lane, don’t attempt to cross Cray’s Common.

If Frank *liked* walking that day her taste was peculiar, for, as she went up Coppet’s Lane, it was with difficulty she could make her way through the deep snow, and against the bitter wind and blinding sleet. She struggled on bravely, however, battling with the elements, and finding a certain pleasure in the fight. The slight figure looked very unsuited for such rude weather, but Frank was of a hardy Northern nature, at all times enjoyed exercise, and had little dislike to the severity of winter. She was like one of those slender graceful Norwegian pines which rejoice in storm and tempest.

Joe Bates’ cottage was reached at last—a

lonely place on the outskirts of a piece of wild, broken, rugged ground, which was known as Cray's Common. There was a path across it, which was the shorter way to Crofton Hall, but Frank had chosen that by Coppet's Lane as being the least exposed. Frank chatted pleasantly for some time with the sick girl and her father and mother, wrote a letter for the poor people to a son at sea, and read them his last letter again.

By this time the weather had cleared, and Frank set off on her return home, taking the shorter path across the Common. When she was about half-way home, however, the storm came on with renewed violence, snow and sleet mixed, driving in her face, and wind that made it difficult for her to keep her feet. She toiled on, fighting every inch of her

way, her feet sinking in the thick snow, her petticoats, wet and heavy, blown round her ankles, the snow blinding her, the sleet cutting her face. Roswal was walking close beside her, depressed and miserable-looking; he was some comfort, but Frank was beginning to feel rather frightened, as well as utterly weary. How should she ever get home? It must be still quite a mile to the North Lodge, and she could make so little way against the storm; supposing she were benighted in the snow! Perhaps it would be wiser to retrace her steps to Joe Bates' cottage, the nearest habitation she knew of, and wait there until the storm was over, or until she was sent for from Crofton. She stopped and looked round. What was her dismay when she discovered that she must somehow have missed the

path ; at least the shapes of tree and bush were unknown to her ; but she was so bewildered by the storm that she could not tell whether she were in the path or not. Then came the dreadful thought of some gravel pits somewhere on the Common ; perhaps she was wandering close to them ! She did not dare move one way or another, and determined to wait until the snow had ceased falling, when perhaps she might be able to discover for certain her whereabouts. She sank down on the snow close to Roswal, clasping her arm round the big dog's neck. There was a sense of comfort and protection in his presence, but the poor child was terrified, chilled, exhausted, and a numb torpor was creeping over her.

Meanwhile Angela had been much disturbed that her cousin should have gone for

a long walk in such weather. Frank was so very headstrong ; if she took a fancy to do a thing it was impossible to keep her from it, but surely there never was a madder fancy than to go out on such a day as this !

Angela could not settle to any occupation ; she stood at the window, and gazed at the white landscape and thick falling snow-feathers, and when the white flakes gradually ceased, and the sky partially cleared, she felt relieved from a good deal of anxiety.

Before long, however, snow and sleet together began to drive against the window-pane, the wind had risen, the sky had grown dark, the storm had come on again with renewed violence.

“If only Frank would come home !” Angela went up to the window of the North Gallery and looked out, but she could not see

her cousin in the avenue. Supposing she had set out for home by the short way over Cray's Common! A hundred nervous fancies crowded into the girl's mind, the least of which was that Frank would be ill from cold and exposure.

Angela ran quickly downstairs, and meeting one of the boys, begged him to go across to the stables, where Harry was smoking and inspecting his horses, and beg him to come and speak to her.

In a few seconds Harry appeared, delighted with the idea that Angela was voluntarily seeking his society. Her first words disappointed him somewhat, as they showed the motive for which she had sent for him, but, before she had finished speaking, he fully shared her feelings.

"Gone to Joe Bates' cottage, did you say?"

why, it's the other side of Cray's Common !
She's as mad as a March hare to think of
such a thing ! When did she go ? ”

“ Immediately after lunch, and I can't think
why she is not back again by this time ; I
hoped she would have got back while it was
fine, but just see how it is snowing now ! ”

“ Well, I will go and meet her,” said Harry.
“ I suppose she would have the *nous* to come
by the lane, at all events ; though it is the
longest way, it must be much less exposed
than the Common.”

“ I don't know, I'm sure,” said Angela, in a
despondent tone ; “ Frank is so reckless, one
can never tell what she will do. Harry, take
your flask and some brandy with you, and
put on your long coat, dear ; I don't like your
going out in this storm either.”

“ A little snow won't hurt me, my pet,”

said Harry good-humouredly. "Cheer up, darling; don't be anxious. I shall probably meet the little goose close to home, and if she goes to bed at once, and has something hot, she won't be any the worse."

He was putting on his great-coat as he spoke, turning up the collar, and pulling his soft hat down over his ears. Angela watched him go out into the storm, strong, cheerful, confident-looking. She turned back into the morning-room, and stood at the window, looking out with ever-growing anxiety. Then, avoiding the drawing-room, that Mrs Willoughby might not discover that Frank was out, she went up to her cousin's room, poked up the fire, got ready warm, dry things, and collected all the materials for making a hot drink.

"Perhaps, after all, her anxiety was

overstrained. Frank was accustomed to wild weather, and had often been wet through without any ill effects."

Meanwhile, Harry was making his way as fast as he could down Coppet's Lane. He began to hope, as he went on and did not meet Frank, that the girl might still be at Joe Bates' cottage. Surely, she couldn't have been so mad as to attempt to cross Cray's Common! He was thoroughly frightened when he reached the cottage at last, and heard from Joe, that "Miss Willoughby had set out to go home by the Common, when it had cleared up. Surely, she must be home by now, it was better nor an hour ago since she had left here."

Harry was terribly alarmed; he made his way quickly up the little steep path that

led from the cottage to the Common, and then, putting his hands to his mouth, shouted with all his strength. The storm had abated its violence by this time, but there was still a sprinkle of sleety snow driving before the wind, enough to obscure the landscape, though not to hide it completely. And what a dreary landscape it was ! The snow had turned the rough heather-covered ground into a smooth white sheet, broken only by the furze bushes, and by some clumps of stunted, twisted, beech-trees. The sky was leaden-coloured ; the twilight was beginning to come on. Harry gazed anxiously round, but he could see no sign of Frank ; he shouted again, and this time there was an answer ; a dog barked in the distance.

Captain Vane gave a loud halloo, and

then a whistle, and, in another two seconds, Roswal was leaping about him, pulling him by the coat with his teeth, running in front of him a little way, then stopping, looking back, as plain as though he could speak, leading in the direction of his mistress.

"I understand," said Harry. "Good dog! go on, old fellow," and he followed the deer-hound as quickly as possible through the snow and the furze bushes. What is that dark heap over there? Surely it is Frank! Harry is sick with dread. He is running now, in spite of the heavy snow, and now he is kneeling by his cousin, while Roswal, overjoyed, is licking his face and hers alternately. She is exhausted, numb with deadly cold, but he has found her, and she is alive.

Did Harry's heart ever leap with joy as it does now, when she looks up at him and says, "I couldn't get any further, I lost my way, I was afraid of the gravel-pit, I thought I should die in the snow."

Tears were in her cousin's eyes, but he answered in a strong cheery voice, "All right now, at all events ; we will soon be home ; here, child, let me put this on you."

"Your coat ! oh no, Harry, I couldn't !"

"Come, come, do as I tell you, Miss. I'm all right ; warm as a toast." He wrapped the coat round her, and Frank submitted—wilful, defiant, headstrong Frank, even feeling a pleasure in bending her will to his. In her need and despair he had come to her — strong, tender, bringing safety and courage and brightness with him.

"Now, child," he continued, "you must

just drink this brandy right off, every drop of it, mind ;” he held the flask to her lips, and had the satisfaction of seeing the spirit bring back to them a faint tinge of colour.

“ It has done me good,” she said ; “ now I think I can walk, Harry.”

“ I don’t think anything of the kind,” was his answer. “ I am going to carry you ; hold on tight.”

He stooped down and picked her up before she could make a remonstrance, and then strode on through the snow, the girl’s head on his shoulder, her slight form borne without apparent effort in his arms.

Frank had only missed the path by a very little way, and Harry soon found it, and toiled manfully on ; making his way towards a sign-post which he knew to be on

the high road. Frank was a light weight, but her winter clothes and his great-coat added to the burden, and besides, the snow made walking difficult; altogether, powerful and muscular as he was, Captain Vane found his work by no means easy. He stopped to take breath occasionally, but, when Frank begged him to let her try to walk, replied, "I don't intend to; so don't make me waste my breath by talking!" and Frank said no more.

It was a strange situation in which she found herself. The gathering darkness was closing round, a bitter wind blowing the snow-flakes all about the lonely, desolate, white landscape. Not a living creature but Roswal was in sight, not a sound to be heard; it was like the silence of death. But she was safe—helpless, exhausted, though she

was—safe, and resting in the arms of the man she loved. He was fighting the elements for her, shielding her, rescuing her from a fearful death. How strong, how brave, how tender he was! With him she had no doubts, no fears, no desires; she felt the confidence of a little child. This utter desolation, this perfect helplessness, was happiness to her; she seemed alone in the world with him. She could not think much, she felt too dizzy and torpid, but it did strike her that death would be easy could she die now!

At last they reached a little door into the park, and were now close to home.

“Here we are,” said Captain Vane. “Now, in another ten minutes or so we shall be safe home, and then you will have these frozen things off, and get into a warm bed, and

have some hot grog. How do you feel, my poor lost lamb ? ”

“ Oh, I shall be all right,” said Frank ; “ let me walk presently, Harry ; I think I am all right. I don’t want you to carry me up to the door.”

“ Very well,” he replied, “ I will put you down as soon as we come to the garden gate ; hold on till then.”

At the gate he put her on her feet, and supporting her with his arm round her waist, nearly carried her to the door. His loud peal at the bell brought a quick response. Angela, old Nurse, and the boys all came rushing to the door before the servant had time to open it, and Mrs Willoughby and Lady Treherne, appearing from the drawing-room, heard all the story. Mr Willoughby had gone to London, and was not expected

home till the next day. Mrs Willoughby began, as usual, to find plaintive fault, but her daughter's white face frightened her, and Harry, lifting the girl once more in his arms, carried her upstairs and into her room.

There Nurse and Angela soon undressed her, put her in bed between warmed blankets, and gave her a great tumbler of boiling hot brandy and water.

"You will make me quite tipsy, Angel," said Frank, smiling faintly. "Oh, I am so sleepy!" and her eyes closed, and her head sank back almost before she had finished speaking.

Then Angela went in search of Harry, and mixed for him some more of the hot punch, which he was nothing loath to take. He was wet through, and very

tired, but cheerful and triumphant with the success of his search.

"If she is sleeping quietly, she will do all right, Angel; don't be frightened," he said. "*I'm* all right; a wetting is nothing to me!"

"Go quick and change your things, though, Harry, dear, dear Harry," said the girl. "How strong and brave you are! *Please* go and put on warm dry things at once—for *my* sake. See you are shivering!"

"All right, my pet," replied Harry, charmed by her tender tone, "I will go; don't worry your dear, sweet, little self! It would take a good deal more than a little snow to hurt such a tough old codger as I am! I will be down in ten minutes."

When he came down he had to give a

full account of the search to Mrs Willoughby and Lady Treherne. The former was pleased to be greatly overcome, until peremptorily set down by her mother.

"Don't be such a goose, Marian," said the old lady. "It is all right now, provided the child is not much the worse for the exposure. So you carried her home, all the way from the middle of Cray's Common, did you, Harry? Well, you are a *preux chevalier*. You should have been one of the old heroes of the *Nibelungen Lied*, instead of living in these degenerate days."

Harry made a low bow in reply to this compliment, and Lady Treherne looked at him with a glance that had in it a strange tenderness,—for her bright sparkling eyes. He was so like the uncle whose name he bore, her poor brother

Harry, who had been the companion of her childhood, and who had been killed in India, when only in his twenty-first year. She had loved this brother, and she felt a softness for Harry, for his sake, hard, worldly old woman though she was. It was most provoking that he should throw himself away on this penniless, unconnected orphan girl; if he would marry Frank, her granddaughter, she would leave them all her money, and Frank was certainly infinitely better suited to be his wife than Angela; besides, Angela did not care a snap of her fingers about him. "I am not blind," thought the old lady, "and I can see when a woman is in love, and when she is not; not that I think it matters much; a year after the wedding, it is much the same whether people have married for love

or not,—but still I fancy Mr Harry would not be pleased if he chanced to discover this. What is the girl marrying him for? his money I suppose, though I did think her too romantic to have so much sense! I wonder why she does not love him! I suppose there is some one else in possession of her fancy. What babies girls are!”

“Harry!” said the old lady aloud, suddenly fixing her keen eyes on him, and speaking in a gracious voice, “will you hold this skein of wool for me, as the *belle fiancée* is not here to be waited on? She seems very fond of solitude, and is little exacting of your attentions, I think. In my young days one used to hear of lovers longing to be *tête-à-tête*, but people are so cold now-a-days!”

Harry felt slightly annoyed, and tried to change the conversation, but his aunt, having him prisoner by the skein of wool, continued her veiled attack.

“It is a thousand pities that Angela does not share your pleasure in out-of-door pursuits and hardy winter weather,—riding, skating, and so. She seems to me a true Southerner; I fear she will find English winters in the country dull and dreary.” Then, having planted her little arrows, Lady Treherne glided smoothly on to other topics.

Harry was, however, too happy and self-confident that night to be easily moved, and Angela was charming to him; gentle, sweet, loving, and speaking in soft, tender tones which thrilled his heart. True; she submitted to his caresses instead of

returning them, but Harry was wisely coming to the conclusion that her nature was more affectionate than passionate, and though it was perhaps a little disappointing to receive but mild, sweet sherbet in return for his fiery wine, still, he must make the best of it and be content.

When Mr Willoughby returned from London the following day, he was much shocked and upset by hearing of the danger in which his darling child had been, and, as Harry said, "as grateful to me as though there were anything to be grateful for!"

"It is thanks to you there is not; to you, and I must say to Angel too, for she took all the right measures to restore warmth without any delay. Lamb says that everything had been done before he arrived here,

and that Angela shows a most remarkable amount of promptitude and common sense ; so you see, Harry, you will have a good nurse for all your hunting-field accidents !”

“ Is Lamb here now ? ”

“ Just gone. He says Frank is all right, nothing but a cold the matter, which must be taken care of, but no inflammation of the lungs. She is terribly fatigued still, poor child, and looks very ill, but I don't think she has looked well for some time. She and Angel have both lost their colour and spring ; don't you think so, Grandmamma ? ” turning to Lady Treherne.

“ Yes, I do, ” was the answer. “ I think Frank wants some change and life. Let her come to Brighton, and stay with me for a short time. ”

"Thank you," replied Mr Willoughby, "I think that would be a good plan ; the sea air will do her good, and you can give her some gaiety and amusement ; not that my Frank is much of a ball-going young lady."

"It is a pity that she isn't more of one, instead of being so devoted to hunting," said Lady Treherne, in a dignified tone. "Harry," with a gracious smile, "I hope you are going to spare a few days to your old aunt, before your leave is over ; I have promised to ask some young men to Lady Maskelyne's ball, on the 20th of February, will you come for it ?"

"Thank you, Aunt Adelaide, I shall be very glad, if I am back from Paris ; but I am going over there to-morrow, to stay with Vivian for a little, and I don't much fancy I shall be back by the 20th."

"Ah, indeed!" said the old lady, "to Paris, to stay with Vivian!—What keeps Vivian in Paris, Harry?"

"I don't know; I suppose he's busy."

"*Busy*," said Lady Treherne, in a sarcastic tone, compressing her lips, and still keeping her eyes on her knitting; then, looking up, she saw that Mr Willoughby had left the room, and that Angela, at the further end, was playing the piano, with too engrossed an attention to hear what passed. "*Busy!*" she repeated; "Harry, do you know that Madame de Rivièra is in Paris?"

"Is she?" said Harry, with an evident start of surprise and dismay; then, controlling himself, he added, "Well?"

"*Eh bien!*" said his aunt, "to a man of the world I need say no more. *Cela m'explique* Vivian's inability to leave Paris!

I should have thought one duel enough to fight about her, *mais*,"—and an arching of the eyebrows and gesture of the hand completed the sentence.

"Who was the d——d good-natured friend who told you this?" said Harry. "I beg your pardon, Aunt Adelaide, but I wish to Heaven people would mind their own affairs?"

"Perhaps *in* Heaven they may," said Lady Treherne; "till then, my dear nephew, do not expect it of them! And consider, too, how dull it would be if we might not abuse our neighbours a little. Scandals give as much zest to an old woman's life as lovers do to that of a young woman. I fear Heaven will be a rather dreary place without either of them!"

Meantime Angela was at the piano, her

fingers playing the "*Lieder ohne Worte*," her mind filled with a tumult of curiosity, longing, and jealousy. She had not heard any of the conversation till Vivian's name had been mentioned, but that one word acted on her like a spell,—she could hear it through any buzz of conversation, or from any distance. "Who was this Madame de Rivière? What was the meaning of Lady Treherne's insinuation?"

In a few minutes Lady Treherne rose and left the room, and Angela, still keeping her eyes fixed on the notes before her, said, "Harry, who is Madame de Rivière?"

Harry started. "What do you mean? Were you listening all the time?" he exclaimed.

"I couldn't help hearing a few words. Who is Madame de Rivière?"

"A Spanish woman married to a Frenchman. What do you want to know for?"

"I don't know," replied the girl; "curiosity. Why should she make—your brother stay in Paris?"

"Oh, that is a bit of the kindness of Aunt Adelaide and all her tea-drinking, ill-natured, old friends," said Harry. "Vivian was a bit spooney about this Madame de Rivière once,—I believe she is very pretty,—but it was a long time ago, and I don't believe that there is anything going on now."

"Why, she's married," said the girl, "or is she a widow?"

"No, De Rivière is alive, and a precious blackguard he is; come along, my innocent pet, and let us go for a walk."

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